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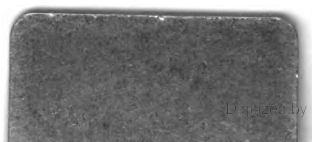
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NOTRE DAME DU CENACLE

OUR LADY OF THE CENACLE
OR, OF THE RETREAT

BY THE
REVEREND FATHER FELIX
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS



All these were persevering
with one mind in prayer with
the women, and Mary, the
mother of Jesus.—ACTS I: 14.

NEW YORK :
THE LAFAYETTE PRESS,
141 EAST 25TH STREET,
1896.

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ZMTB
Felix

Religious of Our Lady of the Retreat
in the Convent

shows

OUR LADY OF THE CENACLE
OR
OF THE RETREAT

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, BY
MISS DEAK

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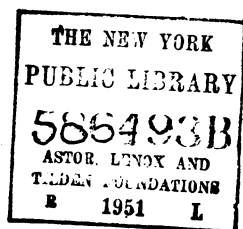


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DEDICATION.

TO THE REVEREND MOTHER SUPERIOR GENERAL OF
THE SOCIETY OF NOTRE DAME DU CENACLE.

Reverend Mother :

To whom more appropriately than to you can I offer these modest pages ? They are yours still more than they are mine. What I have especially desired to express therein, is it not the spirit which animates you, and with which you have the legitimate ambition to animate your entire beloved family of OUR LADY OF THE CENACLE ?

Assuredly, what is offered to you in this little book is very incomplete ; it is really but a sketch, and a sketch by far too imperfect. Your Society deserves better ; it deserves to have one day its history, in which will be seen plainly what this work only gives a glimpse of.

But, while waiting for that history to be written, it has seemed useful to throw at least a

ray of light upon an institution until now too little known to many souls, and by many others, too little understood. How many would have experienced its salutary and fruitful influence if only they had been aware of its existence? And, also, how many souls would have enrolled themselves under that holy banner of Our Lady of the Cenacle if the ideal of that life had appeared to them sooner?

I know the immense desire the Divine Master has put in your heart—to see grow and fructify more and more in his Church the Institute—the care and direction of which he has confided to you in part. May this humble effort contribute, at least in some small degree, to the fulfilment of that holy desire, that is, to make known the generous spirit, and to extend the apostolic action of the little Society to which you consecrate yourself with the double devotion of an apostle and of a mother.

Yes, to see the holy family of the Cenacle develop at the same time with its interior life its exterior beneficent action in the world, is the sincerest wish, the most earnest desire, of the author

*of these pages, who is happy to rejoice with you
in advance over all the good it will please our
Lord to accomplish through your instrumentality.*

J. FELIX, S. J.

LILLE, August 15, 1885.

LETTER OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
GUIBERT, ARCHBISHOP OF PARIS.

*“ To Madame, the Superior General of the Society
of Our Lady of the Cenacle.*

“MY DEAR DAUGHTER :—I have read the little book which the Reverend Father Felix has written to make known your Institute of Our Lady of the Cenacle to persons desirous of learning what is the spirit that animates it and that inspired its Constitutions.

“I blessed the cradle of your Society when I was Bishop of Viviers. Your work commenced humbly near the tomb of the Apostle of Viviers, Saint Francis Regis. It grew noiselessly, nourished with the modest virtues and the obscure labors of your first Mothers. Works destined to accomplish serious good in the Church are born and developed thus.

“To-day your Mother House is in Paris, where Providence has led you. Your Institute has founded several establishments in France and out of France. The Sovereign Pontiff has encouraged it

by his favors and benedictions, and has desired to have a Convent of Notre Dame du Cenacle in Rome itself.

“All these circumstances confirm me in the idea I had when I occupied myself with the drawing up of your Constitutions, and when I aided your first Mothers to pursue their pious design—that your Institute would be particularly useful to the Church in our century.

“Your *end* is to deeply penetrate souls with Christian virtues and habits, by means of the exercises of a Retreat. You join to this principal end the teaching of the Catechism under the different forms suited to the different classes of society. Is not this what souls need in our age, when ignorance of the Christian doctrine is too often met with even in persons who have received a superior education, and when the rules of the Evangelical morality are too often bent to suit the maxims of the world?

“Therefore, my dear daughter, I renew with my whole heart the blessing I formerly gave your infant Society. May all your sisters understand more and more thoroughly that to fulfil the modest apostolate confided to them they must be souls of

prayer and sacrifice, and that they must, before all things, seek for themselves, in the faithful practice of the Evangelical counsels, the perfection of the Christian life which they endeavor to communicate to others according to the functions that devolve upon them in their pious Institute.

“Receive, my, dear daughter, the assurance of my religious and paternal friendship in Our Lord.

“J. HIPP (CARDINAL GUIBERT),

“*Archbishop of Paris.*”

“PARIS, December 5th, 1885.”

INSTITUTE OF NOTRE DAME DU CEN-
ACLE, OR, OF THE RETREAT.

PREFACE.

Notre Dame du Cenacle.

The reader will ask, perhaps, what is the meaning of this title he now meets with for the first time in the history of religious institutions?

We hasten to reply : This name, which certainly is somewhat novel, designates an institution itself relatively new, that is, newer than many others which, from century to century, have made their apparition in the Church of God.

The modest pages he is about to read, have for object—to describe and explain this young Institute already fruitful in fruits of salvation.

God in His most wise and loving providence is pleased to raise up in His Church institutions and works in harmony with the needs of the times ; and it is the lasting glory of that Divine Spouse of Jesus Christ, to adorn herself from age to age with those institutions and those works born of His fecundating breath.

Those institutions constitute in the Christian centuries what may be called the *spontaneous generations* of the Catholic life. In vain persecutions and violence, more or less brutal, essay to crush down that immortal sap of Christian vitality which circulates in the great tree planted by the hand of God, and fertilized by the blood of his Christ; the sap mounts in spite of all efforts to destroy it, and, warmed by the sun of divine love, incessantly bursts into a life ever young and impatient to produce branches ever new, branches divinely fruitful, that bear at each hour of the epoch the fruit humanity requires, "like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season."

Often, we may almost say *always*, these Institutes have small and humble beginnings. Their growth is so obscure and so silent, they make so little noise and throw out so little light, that the world does not even notice them, and becomes aware of their existence only when crowned with their works they appear to the century and seem to say—showing themselves to that world which had ignored them: "Here I am; taste my fruits, and in tasting them learn to know me. I have been

sent by God for the good of humanity ; I was born of His love ; I have grown beneath His breath, and I labor for His glory."

It is then that, struck by the spectacle of an institution whose beauty they admire and whose fruits they gather, the generations ask in their astonishment—ask as the Jews asked on the occasion of the first manifestation of the Christian life in Jerusalem : " What meaneth this ? " *Quidnam vult hoc esse ?* Acts Apost. II. 12. *Sicut liquum quod plantatum est secus decuisus aquarum, quod fructum suum dabit in tempore suo.* Ps. I. 3.

Who has raised up this institution we know nothing of, which we have never even heard of before ? From what land has it sprung ? Under what influence has it grown and spread ? What was its commencement, its progress, its development ? Along what road has it passed, and what obstacles has it surmounted to become as we now see it, with its good works already accomplished and its promises for the future ?

And then, curious and reflecting minds desire to know not only the antecedents, but to penetrate into the interior life of the young institute. They ask : What is there in reality at the bottom of this

new institution ? What is its nature ? What is the spirit that animates it ? and what is the harmony between its inner vitality and its exterior fruitfulness ?

Such are the questions which may be asked regarding the still too little known Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle, and which we shall endeavor to answer so as to satisfy such legitimate and pious curiosity.

May these few pages, while helping to make it known, contribute to make it loved, and, if such be God's will, draw to the Cenacle some of those elect souls who are capable of understanding its spirit, of accepting its discipline, and of fulfilling its mission.

This work divides itself naturally into two distinct parts : the first having for object the relation of the exterior existence, or the historical progress of the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle ; the second, the explanation of its inner nature and its vivifying spirit. These two parts might very well be developed at about equal length ; but a special work destined to make known in a complete manner the entire history of the Institute being, we believe, in contemplation, we prefer to greatly



abridge our relation of that history. We shall devote more space to an explanation of the veritable spirit of the Society of Our Lady of the Cenacle, contenting ourselves with making our first part a sort of introduction, in which we shall merely trace in outline its march across the half century of its existence.

This concise and rapid sketch will be sufficient, we think, to show by one more example how are born, how develop and become fruitful, the institutions God raises up in the bosom of his Church for the salvation of souls and His greater glory.

PART FIRST.

SUMMARY OF THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY OF NOTRE DAME DU CENACLE, OR, OF THE RETREAT.

To what, or to whom, do we owe the Society or the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle? How was it formed? What has it become? In other words—What was its origin? How did it grow? What has been its success, and, at the present day, what is its place in the Church?

First of all, as to the origin. The first commencements of this Institute, we will now relate, very briefly—the circumstances that surrounded its cradle. The complete history of that cradle, which so vividly recalls the manger of the infant God, would offer the reader an edifying spectacle. One breathes therein at each succeeding incident the perfume of the purest Christianity. But it is often better to leave a little shadow, a sort of twilight, hovering about the birth of great and holy things. It is with institutions called to become great as with men we name *great men*—a little

shade around their cradle increases rather than diminishes its prestige. Predestined institutions are like certain rivers—their sources are more or less mysterious, and we can trace their course only when they already water the valleys and fertilize the plains.

To the question: To what, or to whom, do we owe the little Society now decorated with that name beautiful among names, we will content ourselves with replying: We owe it, as many other religious institutions, to a spontaneous movement of the Catholic life. And, if the reader insists upon discovering and seeing, as far as it is possible to see them, the sources whence it sprang, we will say to him, that religious life which bears the blessed name of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* sprang, under another name, from two sources forming one—from the heart of a holy man, and from the heart of a holy woman.

In this there is no cause for astonishment. When God wills to create in His Church a holy and salutary work, a work specially destined to save men and glorify His name, ordinarily He does not address Himself to the great, nor to the learned, nor to the powerful of this earth. He does not unite them



in deliberative assembly to say to them: "We desire to create a work that will cover humanity with its benefits. What must we do first? What means shall we employ to commence, to continue, and, especially, to complete such a work? What does your wisdom, your knowledge, and your genius think of it?"

No, indeed, it is not thus that God proceeds in the creation of His works. "Never," says Joseph de Maistre, "has anything great come out of a deliberation." This is true, at least in a degree, in every order of things, but it is absolutely true in the order of Christian creations. Neither the Institute of Saint Benedict, nor the Institute of Saint Bruno, nor the Institute of Saint Francis, nor the Institute of Saint Dominick, nor the Institute of Saint Ignatius, was born of a human deliberation. And this that we affirm of all religious institutes in general, we can affirm of the Institute of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* in particular.

What, then, is the process usually followed by Divine Providence in these creations of a supernatural order. It is this: God, from the heights of heaven, discovers somewhere on this earth—frequently hidden in the shade, sometimes even in what

are considered in this world the lowest ranks—a choice soul, it matters little whether man or woman, it is the soul he predestines to the accomplishment of a great design. Then what does he do? In that soul, as in a vase of election, He, silently and unseen by the whole world, implants an idea of His own—an idea taken from the treasury of His wisdom and the treasures of His goodness. This idea, at the same time a ray of light and a spark of love, becomes the point of departure of the providential work, or, to speak better, the germ whence the work of God will spring to reveal itself to the world and produce its fruit. This germ is hidden a long while in the soul, that has conceived it before it becomes manifest exteriorly, and that soul bears it in a mysterious silence as God's secret still hidden from men. Often even the man chosen to realize the providential design, experiences in this long gestation of the Divine secret indescribable anguish, alternatives of fear and hope, of joy and sadness, of enthusiasm and discouragement. “Ought I—yes or no—to try to put in action this idea so long kept hidden in the secret of my soul and in the shadow of mystery? If I continue to keep it shut up in my soul as in



a prison, what will be my responsibility? And if I attempt to realize it, how will it be received by the world? Will not the world have for this enterprize the contempt it professes for all that is not its own work, for every work whose source is the summit of Calvary? And even supposing that the world does not disdain and repel it, how can a man such as I—without resources, incapable, feeble, good for nothing—find means to realize this idea, to give a body to this thought?"

Thus the man predestined to create the holy work talks to himself. All those men and all those women chosen by God to create with him in His Church a great and salutary work, know these hesitations, this anguish, and sometimes agony. Thus it is that even before their work has received as much as a commencement of execution, founders and foundresses have already suffered greatly. Before the germ which is to produce the providential work become visible under any form whatsoever, it has been steeped in solitary tears, and in sufferings the dolorous mystery of which the world will never know.

The priestly soul chosen to plant in the garden of God the Institution of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*,

to cast the grains that were to produce the first roots of the future tree, was no exception to this rule. Neither was the Christian woman whom God was pleased to associate with the apostolic man for the creation of the new work.

Who was that predestined man, and that predestined woman? And how did their souls become united to lay in suffering and sacrifice the foundations of the institution in question?

In an obscure village of Vivarais called La Louvesc, near the tomb of Saint Francis Régis, particularly venerated in that region evangelized by his zeal; yes, there, close to the tomb of the great apostle, God found a man, simple and upright; a fervent priest; a zealous apostle; in a word, a saint such as God seeks for the accomplishment of his designs of mercy and love; a saint ignored by the world, and known only in the immediate country where he had carried with the light of his evangelical word the spectacle of his virtues and the edification of his works; a saint, humble among the humble, and who knew so well how to envelope his person in his humility and his work in his obscurity that his name has remained until now almost if not quite unknown, except in the

limited theatre of his apostolate. This man, this apostle, this saint, was named the Abbé Terme, Father Terme he was called ; he was born in 1791, and he died in 1834, in the active exercises of the apostolate, a veritable victim of his zeal and charity.

A remarkable fact : The life of this man of God has many features of striking resemblance to that of the apostle Saint Régis, near whose tomb he placed the cradle of his dear work. Like Régis, he burned with the fire of divine love. Like Régis, he did not hesitate before any sacrifice when there was question of saving souls and glorifying our Lord. Like Régis, he was by preference the humble apostle of the fields and the peasants. Like Régis, he had an apostolate of ten years, and which was, like that of the saint, filled in its rapid course and short duration with fruits of righteousness. And finally, like Régis he died in the heat of the combat, in the force of age, forty-three years, carried off like the great apostle of Vivarais by one of those holy excesses of zeal which makes the death of an apostle a voluntary martyrdom.

Such was the man chosen by Providence to lay the first stones of that living edifice of Notre

Dame du Cenacle, the completion of which he was not to see; *he*, who was nevertheless the true founder; he, the man of humility, of abnegation, of devotedness, of sacrifice, and of sacrifice pushed sometimes to heroism.

Beside the man, apostle and founder, God placed to co-operate in his work, a woman also we may say humble among the humblest. She was a child of twenty-two years of age, but already the *strong woman*, by her courage and her energy matured in the living sources of her faith.

This co-operation of the Christian woman and the apostolic man, appears more or less in the creation of all the institutions that have sprung from the heart of the Catholic Church. It is like a continuation of the Mystery of Calvary where we see the Immaculate Virgin become the *Mother of Grace*, associated by her own sufferings with the Man-God in the universal work of the regeneration of the world. Thus, at the cradle of the Institute of the Sacred Heart which has produced and continues to produce such abundant fruits, there was seen a young Christian girl aiding a holy priest and apostle to form that great and beautiful work.

The cradle of the little society of the Cenacle

offers us a similar phenomenon ; for that child of twenty-two years of age, Father Terme's assistant and co-operator in the first creation of the Cenacle, may, and should by right, be considered its true *foundress* and its first *Superior*. That humble woman in whom all who have seen her pursuing her life-long work, recognize virtues which may be called heroic, still lives, and is known by the venerated name of *Mere Thérèse*, (Mother Theresa). Already over eighty years old, the foundress of twenty-two is preserved to her daughters as if to show them personified in herself, the model and the traditions of the little society whose cradle she saw, and whose successive phases and trials she has followed during more than half a century. "Yes," says of her a religious of the Cenacle in a position to know her intimately and to appreciate her, "that holy and venerated Mother Thérèse Couderc should be considered the first Superior, the foundress of our Society. We know that after the death of Father Terme, and after having valiantly sustained the labors and trials of the first years of the foundation, she offered herself to our Lord and to our Lady as a victim humiliated and suffering, for the preservation and development of the society.

Our Lord and His Holy Mother accepted her offering, and used her as their instrument in several difficult and important circumstances. But especially they made of her a religious of heroic virtue, of a great spirit of prayer, and of a character gentle and firm which has never varied."

Such was the man and such is the woman whom God holily united in the same thought, in the same resolution, and we may add, in the same sufferings and the same sacrifices, for the creation of that work of benediction and salvation which later was to find with its ultimate object its true name of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*.

But what was at first the thought, the resolution, of that man and that woman? We may believe that neither the one nor the other perceived very clearly and under a very definite form what was to result from their common and courageous initiative. What they knew was that they desired to devote themselves to the salvation of souls and the glory of the Divine Master. But under what precise form, and with what definite organization would the dream of their holy ambition be realized? This is what they did not yet quite understand.



Still there was one idea clear in the mind of Father Terme and of Mother Thérèse ; and in truth that idea was, as it were, the root, the mother idea, of their Institute. Impressed, both of them, with the absence of recollection, the want of reflection and meditation, which was then, as in all time (according to the well-known words of Holy Scripture), the great evil of humanity and the desolation of the earth, they conceived the thoroughly apostolic design of inducing souls not only to come as pilgrims to the tomb of Saint Francis Régis, but of inducing them to there recollect themselves in solitude, prayer, and meditation—in a word, in *Retreat*.

In order to facilitate the execution of this design they resolved to open pious asylums, or hospices, where the women who came in crowds with the pilgrimages might follow the holy exercises of a retreat. For this purpose they labored to unite in a community a number of devoted souls who would second and, as it were, complete the ministry of the priest—director and preacher of the exercises—and thus aid the retreatants to gather their fruits.

These first attempts were made a little before

the year 1830 ; consequently, it is now more than half a century since the humble, and, especially the laborious, commencement of an institution that was destined later on to come out of its obscurity and reveal itself to the world rich in fruitful and salutary influences.

The first of those hospices for the giving of retreats was opened on the very summit of the mountain where the apostle of Vivarais and of Velay died, in the village of La Louvesc ; a circumstance which explains how and why the first members of the new community were called the *Ladies of the Retreat*, and also the *Ladies of Saint Régis*. These two names were derived quite naturally from the principal object of their life in common, and from the place where they commenced it.

It was under the name of *Ladies of the Retreat*, and for the principal object of *Retreats*, that the Institute was authorized a first time, May 11, 1835, by the Bishop of Viviers, Monseigneur Bonnel ; then, in 1844, confirmed by his immediate successor, Monseigneur Guibert, afterwards Archbishop of Tours, and now Cardinal and Archbishop of Paris. It was also under the same title that His Holiness Gregory XVI., at the solicitation of

the Bishop of Viviers, deigned a little later to bless the young Institute.

But the title of *Ladies of Saint Régis* could not be easily understood excepting in the immediate neighborhood of the cradle of the work. And that of *Ladies of the Retreat* did not sufficiently distinguish the new religious family from others more ancient bearing the same name without having exactly the same object.

Therefore, those two names were soon to be replaced by another which would better designate the particular character of the Institute by expressing in a more precise and complete manner what should be its basis, namely, prayer and the apostolate ; and especially the most perfect possible imitation of that Retreat which is the model of all others—the Assembly in the Cenacle of Jerusalem, where all the Apostles, awaiting the accomplishment of the great mystery of Pentecost, “were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and *Mary, the Mother of Jesus* ;” and, after Pentecost, filled with the Holy Ghost, they proclaimed the kingdom of God to all people and in all languages.

This title of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*, which was

to become the real and, as it were, the definitive and characteristic, name of the Institute, was officially bestowed upon it by the Bishop of Viviers in a *supplique* addressed to His Holiness Pius IX., who deigned to enrich the little society with spiritual favors. By his Apostolic Letters of the 12th and 19th of September, 1846, the great Pontiff approved the title of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* or of *the Retreat* ; and this same title has been recently confirmed in Rome by His Eminence Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar-General of His Holiness Leo XIII., in a consecration ceremony which we shall mention further on.

As was said, after the birth of the holy Precursor, by a voice inspired from on high : “ His name is John, *Joannes est nomen ejus*, the child shall be called John, *vocabitur Joannes* ; ” so we, inspired by the holiest of authorities, may henceforth say of the Institute of which we are writing: It shall be called *Notre Dame du Cenacle*. Yes, *Notre Dame du Cenacle* is its name—name the *most appropriate* because it is the true and the most complete expression of the thing it designates.

But from this baptism we must return to the birth of the Institute. The new work, such as we



have shown it, was only a rudimental creation, and none could foresee the proportions it would take in the future. It was like a child still in its cradle, and looking at it one might ask one's self the same question that was asked beside the cradle of Saint John the Baptist: "What an one, think ye, shall this child be? *Quis, putas, puer iste erit?*" (Luke, I.: 66).

During a good many long years the little religious family remained in such obscurity and silence that it is rather difficult for whomsoever has not lived its life and shared its destinies to follow in the shadow that surrounds them the first attempts of its apostolate. Like the modest flower of the mountain or of the valley, it slowly revealed its existence by exhaling little by little its perfumes, that is by multiplying around itself its benefits to souls. In a word, the little society bore at its outset and in its first growth that authentic mark of truly Christian things, or rather those three marks which attest resemblance to Jesus Christ—humility, poverty, austerity. A venerable religious, one of the first benefactors of the Institute, the Reverend Father Renault, Provincial of the Jesuit Fathers in France, visited in 1835, after the

death of the holy founder, Father Terme's daughters; and, as he was deliberating before God whether he ought or ought not to occupy himself with that work whose future still seemed so uncertain, he thought he heard an interior voice saying to him: "Take this child that is on the straw."

We cannot better describe, nor by means of a more expressive comparison, the austere realities that surrounded the humble cradle. A history will one day raise the veil which conceals that cradle, and will relate the edifying details this short summary cannot give. Lifting discreetly a single corner of that veil, and leaving to the reader to divine all we cannot tell here, we will content ourselves with saying to him, simply: Go to the Bethlehem of the Infant Society. And as the shepherds recognized the divine Child by His poverty, His humility, His austerity, that is by the manger in which He lay, the swaddling clothes which covered Him, the straw which formed His bed; so, by the same signs you will recognize the little society. *Hoc nobis signum.* The annals of the work attest it. The first chapel where the religious adored our Lord was "a true Bethlehem." *Hoc nobis signum.*

Like Jesus, the Society of the Cenacle had, after

Bethlehem, its Nazareth ; and, like Jesus, it prolonged for almost thirty years its humble, laborious and hidden life. It was the thought and the desire of the holy founder to see his little family grow, like the Child-Jesus, in labor, and in the want of all that has the appearance of riches and of that show the world seeks ; and once when the Sisters asked him to permit a certain embellishment of their poor dwelling, he replied : “ Sisters, let us remember Nazareth.”

Towards 1835 a kind Providence led to La Louvesc a man of God (the Reverend Father Fouillot, of the Society of Jesus), who had received from his superiors the mission to draw up a first plan of outline of constitutions and rules for the new religious family. “In the very first interview,” says Mother Thérèse, “we understood how great was the interest Father Fouillot felt in the work of retreats, and the good he believed it called to accomplish.”

All that venerable religious was thenceforth for holy Father Terme’s daughters ; with what solicitude he watched over them during nearly twenty years ; how many hours of his beautiful and religious life he consecrated to them ; what treasures of

devotedness and charity he lavished upon them, only the survivors of those early days of the Society of the Cenacle can well relate. As for us, we beg to be pardoned for recalling here a dear reminiscence. We can affirm what we saw, when in 1849,* during an entire year passed under the paternal direction, we were the edified and piously impressed witnesses of his devotedness to the young work.

What Reverend Father Fouillot first arranged was rather the plan of a constitution than the Constitution itself. But such as it was, and although only tracing, so to speak, the principal outlines of a constitution, it was on May 11, 1836, communicated to Monseigneur Bonnel, Bishop of Viviers, who gave it his spontaneous approbation and blessed Mother Thérèse, joining to those favors his best wishes for the progress of the new Institute.

Father Fouillot's sketch of a constitution and rules was, as far as the difference of situation and functions would permit, modelled after the Institute of the Society of Jesus. And that infusion into its veins of the large and generous spirit of Saint Ignatius, was for the little family of the

* In 1849 the Reverend Father Fouillot was instructor of the Fathers of the Third Year, then established at Notre Dame d'Ay at the foot of the mountain of La Louvesc.

Cenacle, not the least of the guarantees of its vitality.

Once animated with that great and virile spirit, and thrown, in some sort, into the mould of the Ignatian Institute, the little Society so long hidden in the shadow of its commencements, and, so to speak, shut up in the narrow space immediately surrounding them, might henceforth aspire to issue from its prison and, God helping, without danger reveal itself a little to the world.

As remark the annals of the Institute, "God's designs for the Society and for its apostolic vocation were then perceived. The number of retreatants continued to increase each year.* The Fathers of the Society of Jesus generously lent their aid to the religious, and neglected nothing to form them to a practical use of the Exercises of Saint.

* It is not rare to find in the Journal of the House of La Louvesc of the time of which we speak, passages like the following: "The number of retreatants in our house to-day is seventy-seven, thanks be to God alone! Nothing is more touching than the charity of some of them, who so gladly incommode themselves to enable us to receive others. It is the chapel that first becomes too small. . . ." And on another page: "Those of our retreatants who leave are immediately replaced; affluence and charity render it possible for us to receive incessantly. . . . The persons who make the retreats follow the exercises with admirable simplicity and zeal. They go away satisfied, carrying with them into their parishes the resolutions the Father indicated to them as a fruit of the retreat, and even promising to tell their neighbors about it." (Summer of 1836.)

Ignatius. The work of the general retreats, commencing on the 1st and on the 15th of each month, far from troubling the recollection of the little community, maintained therein a holy ardor, and the gratuitous reception of poor retreatants became the great alms-giving of its poverty. . . .”

“During several years,” writes Mother Thérèse of those early days, “it seemed as though things could not be better for our Congregation. With regard to the spiritual, we could not desire more abundant nor more valuable assistance than that it pleased Divine Providence to provide us with each day. Union, peace, charity, reigned amongst us, and it is sweet to me to recall the happiness I then tasted.”

Nevertheless, the House of La Louvesc was only the cradle where were to be born and grow souls of apostles. It was like a first Cenacle, whence those souls transformed by prayer, suffering, and sacrifice, were to be scattered—in France first, then in foreign countries—wherever it would please the Divine Goodness to call them, almost as the first Apostles when they came out of the Cenacle were scattered, first in Jerusalem and in Judea, then among all the nations to whom the Saviour, ascending into Heaven, had sent them.

The apostolic object of the Society called it quite naturally to establish itself by preference in the large cities, in order to extend over a greater number of souls its holily fruitful influence. Therefore we will say nothing of a first attempt of foundation that was made at Tournon in 1838, and that had no reason to be continued.

Lyons, the city of *predilection of the Blessed Virgin*, harbored the second Cenacle of the Society. It was placed on the summit of the hill of Fourvières, as near as possible to the blessed and glorious sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady. In the month of January, 1845, His Eminence Cardinal de Bonald blessed the chapel destined to general retreats, and since that time the work of retreats has steadily increased in importance in Lyons. What might we not tell the reader of its progressive expansion, and of the rich harvests reaped from it during the forty years that have passed since its commencement in that city!

But the religious families that live with the great life of Jesus Christ are like that life; they aspire to extension and expansion; they demand, by their natural aspiration, "*Amplius*, still more."

Now, expansion, radiation, is not possible with-

out a centre. It is from the centre that part decisive influences. For the great country of France, which had a first right to the extension and diffusion of the work of the Cenacle, that great centre in Paris—Paris, where ordinarily good and evil exercise their most powerful and most absolute influence.

In the beginning of the year 1849, the Reverend Father Fouillot was chosen by the Divine Goodness to transmit to those whom he also named his daughters, the sign of the Providence that called them to Paris. We will not relate here the different vicissitudes which preceded and accompanied that foundation. The third Cenacle of the Society was installed in Rue du Regard, in the spacious and handsome hotel previously occupied by the Mussulman Embassy, and, on December 27, 1850, a chapel had been arranged and was blessed. Monseigneur Guibert, successor of Monseigneur Bonnel, as Bishop of Viviers, had himself asked and obtained the necessary authorization from Monseigneur Sibour, Archbishop of Paris. It was like a triumph for Jesus Christ to see the inauguration of a sanctuary where both would receive so much homage and hear so many holy prayers and sacred songs.

And, verily, from that time until the year 1883, when the Cenacle was removed from the Rue du Regard to the Rue de la Chaise—that is, during a period of more than thirty years—none can tell all the glory our Lord and His August Mother received in that dwelling, once so profaned and afterward so sanctified. There, how many prayers were poured out! How many tears of repentance shed! How many sorrows consoled! How many wavering wills were there strengthened! How many holy resolutions taken! How many souls straying in error were there brought back to the truth! How many hearts troubled by remorse there recovered peace! How many heretics and schismatics there abjured heresy and schism! How many Israelites even there embraced Christianity! How many unbelievers there regained the faith! How many sinners innocence, and how many slaves liberty—a liberty they no longer dared expect—the liberty of the children of God; that is to say, liberty in the truth, in order, and in holiness. All those marvels of the supernatural order, and which often the world knows nothing of, thousands of souls can attest; multitudes can bear witness to them.

Thus the Cenacle installed in the great centre of

our land radiated, as was easy to foresee, and as was from that moment prophesied, not only in the capital, but throughout France, and even to the most distant countries where some souls have carried, to spread around them, the salutary influences received in the Cenacle of Paris.

We have said that Monseigneur Guibert, Bishop of Viviers, and by that title First Superior of the religious family created in his diocese, had used his influence with the Archbishop of Paris to obtain authorization for the foundation in that city. He was by his hierarchical position the man who had the clearest right to decide all questions relative to the government of the Cenacle ; and personally he was the man the most holily devoted to all the members of the Society in general, and to each one in particular.

Monseigneur Guibert, as is well known, is an admirable personification of strength and gentleness, prudence and firmness, kindness and energy, patience and determination, reflection and decision. And, indeed, that great bishop always proved himself to be the surest support of the little Society, and that especially in its difficult hours of trial. Preserving the moderation, which is the sign of

strength, and the calm which is its majesty, he entered into details with the kindness of a father, and decided questions with the most absolute disinterestedness.

In the course of the year 1856 he sought, by an admirable act of abnegation and devotedness, to give a warrant of security and duration to the Society of which he was to become the second Father. It seemed to him that for its greater good he ought to renounce the authority he legitimately exercised over it in his quality of First Superior. Spontaneously he took the generous initiative of asking Monseigneur Sibour to permit the House of Paris to be the *Mother-House*. This new arrangement was inspired by great wisdom, and proposed by an abnegation equally as great. Its result was that the House of Paris, destined by the force of circumstances to acquire a preponderant influence in the Society of the Cenacle, became immediately the centre of union and the seat of government of the society.

Named shortly afterwards Archbishop of Tours, the illustrious prelate did not forget his little family of the Retreat. He found in his heart of father and pastor the desire of having his dear daughters

in his new diocese. That desire was realized in 1862.

The same year, in his love and veneration for the successors of Saint Peter, and believing that all works having a great future before them need to receive from that supreme authority the pledge of their hopes, Monseigneur Guibert addressed to the Holy Father, Pius IX., under date of July 5, a *Supplique* to obtain for the entire Society the Pontifical approbation. The eminent prelate, in this document so remarkable from all points of view, manifests at once his apostolic zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls, his devotion to the Holy See, and his paternal affection for his dear family of the Cenacle.

We regret that we cannot here reproduce the text of that admirable *Supplique* which honors at the same time him who wrote it and the Society in whose behalf it was written; for it treats of that Society in the language of a bishop who knows it well, and of a father who loves it.

Rome, always wise and prudently slow in its acts of official approbation, confined itself to sending, on the 10th of March, 1863, in favor of the Institute recommended by Monseigneur Guibert (and

by the bishops of the dioceses wherein Houses of the Retreat were already established), what is called in the language of the Vatican a *laudatory Decree—Decretum laudis*—adjourning to a subsequent period the formal approbation of the new Institute and of its Constitutions: *Dilata ad aliud tempus Institute et Constitutionum approbatione*. Praise from so high a source, and from so holy an authority, could not but augment the vigor of the Society by increasing its joy and enlarging its hopes.

Another specially vital question preoccupied the Superiors—the question of the establishment of the *Novitiate*, justly considered in all religious families as the guarantee of their future. The Novitiate is to the religious life what the education is to the human life; what a religious shows herself to be in the Novitiate, such she will be, ordinarily, during the rest of her life.

Father Terme had had nothing more at heart than the good formation of the Novices. After his death, it was the Fathers of the Society of Jesus, seconded by Mother Thérèse, who continued this ministry. Under such a direction the Novices were so regular and so fervent that they merited this testimony of a contemporary:

“There was among them a great spirit of union and great good will ; each, wholly occupied with her employment, acquitted herself of it with the greatest possible recollection ; but especially they performed their exercises of piety with such perfect exactitude that during long years there was not the slightest omission to reproach them with on that point.”

The Reverend Father Renault, when he was relieved of the government of the Province of France, wished to continue until his death the instruction of the Novitiate of the Retreat ; and nothing is more touching than the notes of the journal in which the young *religieuses* preserved the wise and sometimes eloquent words of their holy lecturer.

The Novitiate was since 1856 regularly established in Rue du Regard ; but it became important from the double point of view of the material and moral interests of that school of the religious family, to provide it with a separate installation, as is the custom in nearly all religious societies, an installation perfectly adapted to the needs of the soul and those of the body. The seed cast in the open furrow having germinated and vocations multiplying, the need of a more spacious dwelling

began to be felt when Providence, ever admirable, placed at the disposal of the Superiors for a new installation of the Novices, a vast and retired country mansion near Versailles.

The General Chapter of 1867 labored to *perfect* the incomplete work of the Constitution and Rules. Never, even in the best institutions, does the organization reach its highest perfection in one bound. The Institute of St. Ignatius, for example, one of the most complete and most perfect as an organization, has been subjected to successive modifications, having for object the bringing to a still higher degree of perfection the working of its Rule; and, while remaining, so to speak, immutable in its basis, it has admitted the possibility of progress towards greater perfection of details.

All human creations are perfectible; and the Catholic Church herself, notwithstanding the divine privilege of her immutability, does not, according to the profound thought of Vincent de Lerius, exclude all progress. We, therefore, can easily understand that the Chapter desired to study and define the modifications and additions experience had shown the necessity or utility of,

in order to give the Constitutions thus modified or added to the sanction of the entire Society.

The moment seemed chosen to receive from the Sovereign Pontiff, after the laudatory Decree of 1863, the desired Decree of a formal Approbation. That Decree, so impatiently awaited, was at last granted on the 18th of March, 1870. Its principle articles are as follows :

“His Holiness Pius IX., considering the letters of recommendation of the bishops of the dioceses in which the Society is established, and considering the abundant fruits it has produced, *approves* the pious Institute as a Congregation making simple vows, under the government of a Superior General, but subject to the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries according to the prescriptions of the holy Canons and of the Apostolic Constitutions and by the terms of the same Decree, he (the Holy Father, Pius IX.) *approves* and *confirms* the Constitutions as they are contained in the exemplar, the manuscript of which is preserved in the archives of the said Congregation.”

Such was in substance the Decree of Approbation of the religious Society entitled *Notre Dame du Cenacle* or *de la Retraite*. It brought to the

entire family an increase of strength. And it arrived opportunely, for it preceded by only several months the terrible calamity of the war of 1870-71, which overthrew so many things and was complicated by an internal civil war. The Society could not but feel the consequences of that frightful catastrophe. The Novitiate hardly installed in the very place where the enemy fixed his headquarters during the siege of Paris, had to abandon its cherished abode of Versailles, and emigrate to Tours to find a refuge under the paternal protection of Monseigneur Guibert.

In the midst of the funerals which the disasters of the war multiplied throughout the mourning country, the little Society of the Cenacle signalized itself by its devotedness and its sacrifices. The greater number of its houses, notably those nearest the theatre of war, were transformed into ambulances, and the religious who inhabited them into devoted hospital nurses. The action of Providence therein was manifested by authentic signs; and the souls it protected in that hour of deep desolation were remarkable on their side for their abnegation and self-sacrifice—approaching heroism. It will belong to the complete history of the Society

to reveal the wonders we refer to, the greater part of which were witnessed by God alone. We hasten to relate rapidly the events which marked for the Cenacle the end of those stormy days.

Monseigneur Guibert had become Archbishop of Paris, and by that fact he re-entered into possession of his authority as First Superior, authority he had so generously renounced when nothing caused him to foresee that he would himself one day be that Archbishop of Paris in whose favor he abdicated his Superiority.

It was then that period of great hopes which usually follows a time of discouragement. Pilgrimages moving in all directions over our land of France, seemed to renew in this plain nineteenth century the religious manifestations of the Middle Ages. The pious enthusiasm everywhere burst forth in songs which caused souls to vibrate with joy and confidence. One song especially resounded louder than the others along all the roads leading to the little city, illustrious on account of the heavenly favors therein received by the Blessed Margaret Mary: it was "*Sauvez, sauvez la France au nom du Sacre Cour!*"

The Cenacle had quite naturally its place marked

out in Paray-le-Monial. It was there, as at La Louvesc and at Notre Dame de Fourvières, the complement of the work of pilgrimages. Since that foundation of Paray-le-Monial (1873-1874), God knows how many souls have passed from the sanctuary where the Divine Heart of Jesus is adored to that other sanctuary where is honored more directly the virginal Heart of the Mother of Jesus—that is to say, from the sanctuary of the Visitation to the sanctuary of the Cenacle, and *vice versa*. And thus it is that those two works, which correspond to the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, aid instead of injuring one another.

We have not space to describe the other houses of the Society founded in Nancy, Lille, Marseilles, Turin, Milan, etc., nor to relate the circumstances of their foundation. We must content ourselves with remarking that everywhere are produced, in proportion to the relative importance of the localities, with the same works of apostolate, the same fruits of salvation and holiness.

It is of Rome only, of Rome especially, that we wish to speak. It was not enough for the young Institute to have received from Rome at first the

apostolic *benediction*, then a *laudatory* Decree, then, finally, a Decree of *Approbation*.

In order to better ensure in itself and in all its members the great vitality, that is to say, the substance and the sincerity of the Catholic life, of which Rome is the centre, it needed to receive in that city itself its fertilizing inspirations and holy influences, and, if possible, to live under the regard of the Father of Catholicity. It needed to draw the true apostolic spirit from that great focus of the apostolate created by the first of the Apostles. It needed to take root in the very centre of the Eternal City, that is to say, in the place of the entire world the most suited and the most favorable to the double radiation of the religious and the apostolic life.

On July 7, 1879, the Superior General of the Society was honored with a private audience of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. We know not what words were exchanged between the Father of Catholicity and the Superior of the Cenacle in that intimate colloquy, but we do know, from good authority, that the Holy Spirit had wonderfully disposed the mind and heart of the great Pontiff in favor of the Society that came to beg his protec-

tion. The fact is that Leo XIII. received his dear daughter in our Lord in the most kindly and fatherly manner. The Holy Father, who so readily discerns things destined to serve and rejoice the Church, saw at a glance in the new Institute, such as it was presented to him, a sign from God, and he foresaw that this new religious family, vowed especially to the apostolate of prayer, of the teaching of Christian doctrine, and of the work of retreats, had its place marked by Providence in the Papal City, where, notwithstanding so many admirable works which are its ornament, the need of an apostolate was felt.

As a first result of this audience the foundation of a Cenacle in Rome was decided *in principle*, and the Congregation received from His Holiness, with encouragement for the present, a benediction which presaged all those reserved for it in the future.

On the 15th of October Mother Sophie Etienne arrived in Rome with several *religieuses*, for the purpose of changing into a fact what the Holy Father had decided *in principle*, and on the 8th of December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the blessing

of his Holiness, she installed the little community in a modest part of the *Savorelli* Palace, in the Place of the Holy Apostles.

Where more appropriately than in the Place of the Holy Apostles could this new fire of the apostolic life be kindled? As everywhere else, it commenced there in the most humble manner, and under the roof of a palace,* it still recalled Bethlehem and Nazareth. It recalled likewise the high and spacious room which was the first Cenacle. This was for the Society a circumstance of immense importance, for which it was not possible to too much thank the God of all blessings and Our Lady of the Cenacle.

But there is a fundamental law which rules the Christian world and presides over the works that are fruitful in the Church of God ; it is the law of sacrifice. When we look closely we find almost always beneath the foundations of everything that is to become great some holy victim, assuring to the growing work the force that comes from suffering. Mother Etienne was chosen by Providence to fulfil this great law of sacrifice in the foundation of the Cenacle of Rome—a foundation which

* The Community occupied the upper floor.

more than all the others was full of promise and hope. Truly, she was a choice victim ; such a one as Jesus and Mary desire, to fertilize works that have sprung from their hearts. Mother Etienne was naturally and supernaturally one of the most richly gifted children that her religious family had yet produced. Therefore, we will astonish no one, and much less those of her companions who saw her near to in the practice of her daily personal life, by saying that she was one of the flowers that have the most embalmed the Cenacle with their sweet perfume—a living flower, humanly speaking, too soon gathered, but the sacrifice of which supernaturally was to be an agreeable odor to the God of Calvary and to Notre Dame du Cenacle. Mother Etienne died in the full summertime of her life ; and we know that she made of the couch on which she expired an altar whereon she immolated herself—herself offering to God that flower of a holy and virginal life for the triumph of the Church she had so well served, and also for the prosperity of the Institute she had so much loved. On the 11th of September, 1881, she consummated her sacrifice by bequeathing to one of her dearly beloved sisters in Jesus Christ the task

of finding for the Cenacle of Rome a dwelling and a chapel, if the accomplishment of that desire would be for the greater good of the Church and for the greater glory of God and of Our Lady of the Cenacle.

Providence seemed to respond to the wish expressed by the holy victim. In the beginning of the year 1882 a combination of circumstances that plainly showed its kind interference, opened to the community a spacious dwelling situated in a quarter of the city the best suited to the exercise of its apostolate and of the salutary influence the Holy Father himself desired to see it acquire. From the platform of an elevated terrace the religious may breathe the purest air of heaven, and may with one single glance take in the delicious perspectives and the radiant horizons of the Roman *campagna*, and the majestic and elegant cupolas of the Christian world ; in short, their abode is on a site that seems as if made expressly for the highest contemplation and for the most extended action.

Some months were spent in adapting the house to the prescriptions of the Institute and the usages of the religious life. This intelligent transformation being completed, His Eminence Cardinal Par-

occhi, Vicar-General of Pope Leo XIII., deigned, in his quality of representative of His Holiness, to publicly inaugurate on the 19th of April, 1884, the graceful chapel dedicated to God under the title of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*, and to solemnly consecrate its principal altar.

This ceremony constitutes, in our opinion, one of the chief events of the annals of the Society; and the words inspired by so high an authority, which the illustrious representative of the Holy See pronounced on the occasion, give to the solemnity an importance and a bearing truly exceptional. Therefore, we believe it our duty to here record those memorable words, not only because they are perfectly beautiful and piously eloquent, but especially because they are for the family of the Cenacle the highest recommendation, and because they borrow from the eminent position of him who pronounced them the highest authority words can have upon this earth after those of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. We may even add that these words have in a certain sense the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, since, as the reader will see, the Eminent Cardinal declares publicly that he is, in what he says, in favor of the Cenacle, the organ of Leo XIII.

After having explained to the pious assembly the mystical meaning of the ceremonies of the benediction of the chapel and of the consecration of the altar, the eloquent Cardinal, speaking of the Cenacle and of the Institute which bears its name, says :

“ These ceremonies, filled in all their details with most elevated significations, borrow a special meaning in this blessed sanctuary where the Virgin Mother is honored as presiding over the Apostolic College, awaiting in the Cenacle the descent of the Holy Ghost. This *mystery*, in our day too little known to the multitude of souls, seems to me to be providentially brought into notice at this moment ; and this Church, erected in the centre of Rome, and the *first dedicated to Mary in the Cenacle*, appears to me as a token of benediction for the Church Universal ; and I argue from it the coming of happier days.

“ It was in the Cenacle that was raised the first altar upon which the apostles offered the Divine Sacrifice for the first time. It is of tradition in the church that Saint Peter celebrated the first mass on the day of Pentecost immediately after the descent of the Holy Ghost. The writings of

the holy Fathers prove it and are confirmed by the testimony of St. Luke who says in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles : *They were persevering in the breaking of bread.* (Acts II.: 42.) Now these words, *the breaking of bread*, always refer in the sacred text to the most holy Eucharist. In that holy chamber of the Cenacle Mary appears to us at once subject and queen of the apostles ; *subject by reason* of the hierarchical position of those who were the ministers and the dispensers of the sacraments ; for such was the prerogative of the apostles whose mission was to build up the Church, and from whom Mary received the Bread of Life. But still Mary was *Queen*, and an incomparable queen, by reason of the plenitude of grace she had received, of the excellence of her moral dignity as mother of God, and of the authority of universal mother she had received at the foot of the cross.

“ Perhaps it will seem superfluous, venerable sisters, to recommend to you earnestly to often contemplate in the altar we have just consecrated to God in honor of the Blessed Virgin *in the Cenacle*, the primitive origin and the object of your Institute. It is true that but half a century

has elapsed since your appearance in the Church. Admirable, without doubt, was the life of your founder . . . glorious was your cradle. But the providential origin and the most ancient cradle of your congregation *is the Cenacle of Jerusalem*; and your principal foundress is *Mary, queen and mother of the apostles in the Cenacle*.

“While you lovingly kiss the tomb of the apostle Saint Regis near which your Institute was commenced, I exhort you to kiss in spirit with still greater love the walls of the Cenacle of Jerusalem, and to say: Our cradle was that of the Church; we were already founded in those chosen souls gathered around the Most Holy Virgin in the Cenacle; we still abide there, for the true dwellers in the Cenacle are not they who materially tread its pavement, but those who possess its spirit.”

The illustrious orator goes on to exhort the religious to penetrate themselves profoundly with the spirit of the Cenacle, and to endeavor to penetrate with that same spirit all the souls that come under their influence. Then he continues:

“I have implored the blessings of God upon you; and I am happy in consecrating this altar to likewise consecrate *your Congregation* to the Most High.”



Then come these remarkable words which should remain graven in the hearts of all the daughters of Our Lady of the Cenacle, as a precious souvenir of this solemnity, and as the most resplendent consecration of their dear Society after its half-century of existence.

“The Holy Father, the immortal Leo XIII., desires, venerable sisters, that I express to you all the joy he feels at seeing you established henceforth in our city. It is *in his name* that I speak to you at this moment, and the blessing I am about to give you *will be his*. Receive, then, *this benediction of the Vicar of Jesus Christ*. . . .

“The Sovereign Pontiff hopes that *this Cenacle* will be for souls a centre of graces and heavenly favors. And as from the first (Cenacle) the Holy Ghost spread over the world those rays of light and of peace which renewed it, we love to hope that from this *second Cenacle* established in the Capital of the Catholic world in times not less stormy, he will spread amongst us the light and peace so many need.

“O Mary, abide in this house, and draw to it the gifts of the Holy Ghost, thy divine Spouse! May those who sojourn herein experience his

salutary influence, and may he grant the petition of him who now prays at this altar. . . Yes, well beloved *Sisters of Notre Dame du Cenacle*, this is our wish and our prayer ; that the fruits already gathered, the blessings already received, be but the first-fruits and the harbingers of the fruits and blessings you will obtain in the future. . . .

“The persecuted church came forth from the first Cenacle to spread and triumph ; *the consecration of this new Cenacle will mark an epoch of renovation for souls, and will be the aurora of better days for this dear Rome.*”

An interest of the highest order is attached to this magisterial discourse. It is a *great act* ; it is still more, it is a *monument* that will tell posterity that in the year of grace, 1884, the Institute of the Religious of Our Lady of the Cenacle was solemnly praised and publicly approved by the highest authority the world knows. It is also a *commission*. The Institute had said to the Holy See, by the voice of the bishops—its protectors—as the prophet said to God : “Here I am, send me : *Ecce ego, mitte mi.*” And Jesus Christ’s Vicar on earth—that is, Jesus Christ himself—has replied to all the generous souls, who, by

their profession, belong to the Institute : "Go, you also, and under the direction of your legitimate pastors, teach the ignorant ; sanctify souls, and console the church by the faithful practise of the rule of that institute which I consecrate, bless, and approve, by giving it its place near me and its function in the city of Pontiffs—the centre of Catholicity. Go ; I confide to you a mission which associates you to that fulfilled by the holy women in the early ages of Christianity. I have chosen you, and I have placed you in the field of my Church, in order that you may there produce fruit, and that your fruit should remain; *ut fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat.*" (John XV.: 16.)

The Institute counts as yet but half a century of existence. As the grain of wheat which is to sprout in the spring, to blossom in summer, and to yield ripe fruit in the autumn, remains during the long winter hidden in the earth, buried under the snow, and sometimes covered by the ice ; so the Institute of the Cenacle remained, not only in a figurative sense, but really as though buried beneath the snows of its winter, while waiting the buds and the blossoms of the hour marked by God

for the advent of its spring-time. Unless we are greatly deceived, the moment is at hand when it will extend its branches and unfold its most beautiful flowers.

The Spirit breathes where he will and *when* he will. Now that divine Spirit breathes more and more over the holy work of the Cenacle. It is not possible for us to doubt it: the Cenacle will grow and continue to grow; it will widen its tents and its pavilions; become too small to receive all who seek therein light, holiness, the apostolate. Yes, many souls, and of the choicest, will come to take their rank in that legion where the apostolate of the Christian woman finds wherewith to satisfy its holiest ambitions, and where her heart adapts a noble and sublime object to its need of sacrifice of self and devotion to others.

Without pretending to the illuminations and visions of the prophets, we believe we may manifest our personal presentiments on this point. These presentiments are not inspired by human considerations, but by considerations of a superior order. The supernatural sap mounts in the tree and spreads in the branches. We think we know that for the culture of that tree, and in the labor

of its development, the resources and industries of human prudence are not counted upon, but the light and the inspirations of divine grace. And that is, we believe, the most authentic seal of works called to become great and fruitful in the Church of God. Behold why we dare promise a great future to the Institute of the Cenacle!

In proportion as its branches will extend and multiply, they will develop and popularize the work, which is its special work — the work of retreats; I mean, of retreats the nearest like that made by the apostles, gathered around the mother of Jesus in the Cenacle of Jerusalem during the days between the mystery of the Ascension and the mystery of Pentecost. Yes, we have the conviction that propagation of the *true* retreat, of the solitary and silent retreat, of the recollected and prayerful retreat, of the meditative and contemplative retreat, of the efficacious and militant retreat, will accomplish, not only in Rome, but everywhere, that *renovation of souls* invoked and announced by the eminent Cardinal Parocchi on the occasion of the solemn consecration of the Roman Cenacle. The abundance and the beauty of the fruits that will be produced by this practice

of retreats—of retreats so made as to really transform the soul—will clearly show to the world of the future God's design and the kindness of His Providence in the creation, in the nineteenth century, of the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle.

Yes, we sincerely believe in that brilliant future of the Institute of the Cenacle, but on one condition—on the condition that the little Society preserves the spirit which is its own particular spirit, its special vitality; just as the tree grows, develops, and produces its fruit only on the condition of preserving always vital and pure the sap that causes it to grow, blossom, and bear fruit.

In what consists the particular spirit of the Institute of Our Lady of the Cenacle, is what we have promised ourselves to more especially explain in this modest work. Therefore, in the second part, we shall be more lengthy, in order to show, as plainly as possible, what may be called *the living and vivifying soul* of the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle.

PART SECOND.

THE PARTICULAR SPIRIT OF THE SOCIETY OF NOTRE DAME DU CENACLE, OR, OF THE RETREAT.

PREAMBLE.

THUS far we have seen how the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle pursued its slow but progressive march across more than half a century, until it reached the specially solemn hour when it took its place in the centre of Catholicity under the kindly and sympathetic protection of the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., protection publicly proclaimed by his Vicar-General, Cardinal Parocchi.

Now, it is for us to enter into the intimacy of the new Institute in order to discover what is the special characteristic of its life. Religious institutes, in the diversity of their forms and functions, have one common object which causes their wonderful unity, and that is the imitation of the life

of the divine model, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the imitation of His holy Mother, who is also a model of perfection and sanctity. But, while imitating those two great models, the different institutes imitate more particularly a certain special virtue of the one or of the other.

Thus, such a religious order imitates more especially the humility of our Lord ; another His poverty ; others His obedience ; others His austerity. Some reproduce more closely His hidden life, others His public life ; and several imitate both, joining action to contemplation and uniting the apostolic and the ascetic life.

It is the same with institutions that take for their model the Virgin Mary, mother of God. All imitate her, but from different points of view and under different aspects. Some follow her and imitate her in the Temple, in her life of prayer, recollection, and contemplation ; others imitate her life in Nazareth, and reproduce her labor, obedience, and poverty ; others follow her in Judea and Galilee when with the holy women she ministered to Jesus in his evangelical journeyings ; others have followed and imitated her on the summit of Calvary, conforming themselves as closely

as possible to the image of the sufferings she shared with her divine Son.

No religious family that we know of had as yet made profession of especially imitating *Mary in the Cenacle*. That mystery of the life of the mother of God had not as yet, it seems, had its special reproduction and its professional imitation in a Christian institution ; and it is easy to understand how a new religious society bearing that title and having for object the particular imitation of that mystery, should at first have excited some astonishment and have remained for some time more or less misunderstood. But it will be seen from the fuller explanations that are to follow, how that religious society perfectly justifies in every sort its title and its profession.

The Institute of which we speak has made of that representation and imitation of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* its particular object and its principal function ; and it is that which creates for it in the admirable variety of the institutions consecrated by the Church, a place apart, and impresses upon its holily original character : to imitate in an especial manner the Immaculate Virgin, mother of God and mother of men, under the title

as significative as charming of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of divine grace; *Regina Apostolorum*, *Mater Divinæ Gratiæ*.

Such is the specialty of the Cenacle, such its particular physiognomy among the multitude that altogether constitute for our mother the Church so marvellous a beauty.

But what is in this Society—the true spirit that animates it? What is its vital principle?

All bodies in the moral order as well as in the physical order, have a breath that animates and moves them; it is what we usually name *l'esprit de corps*, the bond or the link of brotherhood, that is to say, the intimate and vital spirit which keeps the members in harmony one with another and incites them to a common action. What then is the spirit which animates, vivifies, and moves the little family of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*?

Let us hasten to declare it: that spirit is above all the great and generous spirit of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, that magnanimous father of the Society of Jesus. If in the two institutions the forms and the functions are different, we may say in the truest sense that the spirit is the same.

This identity, or at least this resemblance of the vivifying spirit, has in this case nothing to astonish us if we take into consideration the antecedents, the Constitutions, and the practices of the Society.

The principal founder without being a member of the Society of Jesus, was guided by its spirit in all he undertook ; he had even resolved to join it ; the annals of Notre Dame du Cenacle shows this clearly. They also show that the apostle-founder before dying expressed the desire to see the children of his little religious family confided especially to the sons of Saint Ignatius ; and that the holy foundress, the Reverend Mother Thérèse, expressed to Monseigneur Bonnel, Bishop of Viviers, a similar desire. The fact is that after the death of the Abbé Terme, it is the Jesuit Fathers who have done the most to favor and encourage his work. Therefore, leaving out certain differences necessitated by the different functions of the two societies, a first glance at the Constitutions and Rules of the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle shows us that they have been so exactly copied from those of the Society of Jesus that even the greater part of the text is identical.

Assuredly, the Institute of the Retreat is not the only one which, in these later years especially, has borrowed considerably from that of Saint Ignatius. Nearly all the new congregations that propose to unite the active and the contemplative life, have drawn largely from the treasure of the Constitutions of Saint Ignatius, but we think no one of them has drawn more largely than the Institute of the Retreat.

The simple comparison of the text of the two institutes permits us to affirm that in the greater part of the points, especially of the essential points, the letter (of the Constitutions and Rules) corresponds to the letter. Now, in both institutes the letter must naturally have brought with it the spirit that dictated it. It is then quite simple and perfectly logical to suppose that the identity of the letter has engendered the identity of the spirit.

And, besides, what we know of the practices of the young Institute permits us to affirm that it is full to the brim of the spirit of Saint Ignatius. By that sign it is easy to recognize in it a branch sprung from the great tree planted in the Church of God by Ignatius of Loyola, and thence to prove

that the same sap circulates in the branch and in the tree, and (reserve being made for the diversity of conditions) incites to analogous works of virtue, of holiness, of apostolate. In a word, we may be sure that if in the two Institutes the manifestations of the Christian and apostolic life are produced under necessarily different forms, there is one same spirit animating them ; and that spirit is none other than the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ *combating*, even to a bloody agony, *devoting* himself even to a death bloodier still for the salvation of men, and during all His earthly life remaining united to His Heavenly Father by a *perpetual prayer*.

We wished at first to establish in a general way that the true spirit which animates and vivifies the little Society of the Cenacle is, as it were, an efflux of the spirit of the Society of Jesus.

We have to show now, in a more precise and definite manner, the religious specialty of the life of the Cenacle.

The particular spirit of this Society, as of every other society, is plainly revealed by the whole and by the details of its Constitutions and Rules ; it is at once the principle and the result of those Con-

stitutions and Rules ; the spirit of the founder passing naturally into the Constitutions and Rules ; and the Constitutions and Rules tending to develop that spirit ; and it is on the strict and constant observance of both that depend the vitality and fecundity of the religious family.

But the details of the legislation of the Cenacle may not be related in the narrow limits of this little volume. We will only signalize three things, the union of which seems to us to form the particular spirit of the Institute and to outline its true physiognomy. These three things, really of the chiefest importance, may be expressed in about these terms :

1st. *The labor of combat*, of combat against self, which constitutes the *basis* of the life of the Cenacle, and is its necessary starting-point.

2d. *The apostolate by devotedness, self-sacrifice*, which is its *form* and characterizes its exterior action.

3d. Union with God by *prayer and meditation* which constitutes its living *soul* and guarantees its true fecundity.

The first of those three essential conditions indicates especially what the *religieuse* of the

Cenacle should be in her relations with *herself*.

The second, what she should be in her relations with her *neighbor*.

The third, what she should be in her relations with *God*.

Certainly these three things are contained more or less evidently in the Summary of the Constitutions and Rules, which determine their applications to the diverse relations of the life of the Cenacle. But it is important to put in special relief, and to more directly and formally accentuate these three points which are an abridgment of all the rest, and in some sort the *Summary of the Summary* itself, and by which all the different rules are brought together and united in these three ; a triplicity which has its unity in this single thing : *the perfection of the religious and apostolic life in the Society of the Cenacle*.

Thus, without having at hand the text of the Summary of the Constitution and Rules, one can form a true and perfectly exact idea of the life of the Cenacle ; consequently, a sufficient idea, an idea to give a legitimate satisfaction to souls piously curious to know what that life is : what is its *basis*, its *form*, and its living and vivifying *soul*.

CHAPTER I.

THE LABOR OF COMBAT IN THE CENACLE.

SECTION 1.—Necessity of combat against self.

The first element, the fundamental element—what a beloved and venerated voice in the Institute has proclaimed as constituting the *basis* of the life of the Cenacle—is *labor*. It is like the first layer upon which rests the entire structure and which the entire structure supposes labor—that is to say, the *effort to conquer a difficulty*. In fact, it is in that effort to conquer difficulties that exists in our fallen state the essence of what we call *labor*. All labor is action, but all action is not labor. There is an action which does not labor. To labor, action must struggle with difficulties, which means almost always more or less suffering.

Labor, thus understood, is the law of every human life ; it is of such labor that the Scripture says : “ Man was born to labor as the bird to fly.” These words, which are applicable to every human existence on this earth, have their special application to the Cenacle ; and if we should be asked

what the *religieuses* of the Cenacle do in their retreat and solitude, we might reply : in the first place, they labor. By their labor they imitate Mary, their model ; not only Mary in the temple, Mary in Egypt, Mary in Nazareth, Mary on Calvary, but also, and more closely than elsewhere, Mary *in the Cenacle* ; for, we must believe it, there, also, Mary labored. She labored with the holy women like her, shut up in the Cenacle. She labored to serve the apostles. She labored especially to instruct them, to sanctify them, to console them, to encourage them in the great apostolic work which awaited them on their leaving the Cenacle.

No, we will further say, it is not for repose, it is not for tranquillity, however holy it may be ; it is for labor and fatigue that souls come to the Cenacle.

But, let us note it well, the labor which is the special portion of the family of the Cenacle, is not a commonplace labor, a more or less vulgar labor ; it is the noblest and the most generous labor, labor in its highest sense : the labor of the *combat*, *labor certaminis*, as says the pious author of the Imitation. Yes, it is in that magnanimous labor that the Cenacle has especially to exercise her

children. It has everywhere and always to initiate and form them to the accomplishment of that supreme law of life proclaimed by the patriarch Job : “The life of man upon earth is a warfare, *militia vita hominis super terram.*” (Job VII.: 1.) Whosoever is not ready to accept and practise that labor of the struggle, was not made for the army of the Cenacle, and is not worthy to march under its glorious banner.

Those whom God has placed at the head of this little legion to fight the *good* fight—that is to say, the fight, the combat that saves and delivers—can and ought always to say by action, if not by word, what Gideon said to his soldiers before engaging in a decisive battle with the enemy : “Whosoever is fearful and timorous, let him retire and return to his house : *qui timidus et formi dolosus est revertatur.*” Twenty-two thousand withdrew, leaving but ten thousand. It was still too many. Another proclamation reduced Gideon’s army to *three hundred*. This was what God wanted in order that his power might be more clearly shown in the victory of Israel. And God said : “By the three hundred men I will save you, *tricentis viris liberabo vos* ; and I will deliver the people of Meadian

into thy hands." (Judges VII.: 1-7.) In like manner she whom God has chosen to lead the little legion of the Cenacle to the combat, may say: Whosoever fears the struggle should not march with us. What we desire, what we seek, is not numbers, but valor, intrepidity capable of facing everywhere, always, and under all forms, that which constitutes our first and sovereign law, the labor of the combat, *labor certaminis*.

But the combat the Institute asks here is not alone the *exterior* combat; it is still more, and above all, the *interior* combat. What must be conquered is not only what is *outside* of ourselves, it is especially what is *within* us. In a word, to conquer self, *vincere seipsum*, is the difficult and generous labor to which their Institute invites the *religieuses* of the Cenacle.

Vincere seipsum: conquer one's self: that is the device of the children of Saint Ignatius; that is the substance and, so to speak, the marrow of the exercises by which he fashions them to make them fit for the conquests of their apostolate, that is to say, for all exterior combats; for whoever knows how to conquer what is within him, will know how to easily conquer what is without and around him.

Assuredly, these warlike words, *conquer one's self*, must be more or less the device of the perfect, or rather of all men and women who are endeavoring to become perfect ; for they are the mainspring of all perfection. The pious author of the Imitation says : " We profit in the same proportion that we labor to conquer ourselves : *Ibi homo plus proficit ubi magis seipsum vincit*. Yes," he adds, " You will advance as much more as you will have done greater violence to yourself." (*) In this sense to conquer self is the law of all that tends to the *perfect*.

But we may say without deviating from the truth that Saint Ignatius, in his military way of understanding Christianity and holiness, has in his Book of the Exercises insisted more than any other ascetic writer upon the supreme necessity of conquering self, and has inculcated this necessity to all his children ; he has marked it as a particular seal and a special character upon his entire Institute. And because, as we have demonstrated, the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle is animated with the spirit of Saint Ignatius, we have reason to say that the warlike formula, *conquer self*,

* Imit. Book I., Chap. 23.

must needs be also in a special manner the device of the Cenacle.

Doubtless, this work of combat which is laid down as the solid basis of the life of the Cenacle, must extend to many things which do not enter strictly, or by their nature in the sphere of *self*, strictly speaking. The *religieuse* of the Cenacle must be ready to struggle valiantly against everything outside of herself, which is more or less an obstacle in the way of her perfection. Outside of the intimate sanctuary of her personal life, the labor of combat imposes itself upon her under the most varied forms.

There is the labor of material fatigue, for the lay sister especially.

There is for the choir-nuns the labor of intellectual fatigue, the labor of doctrine and of study.

There is, above all, the labor of moral fatigue, the struggle sometimes painful against the difficulties that spring from the exigencies of the common life.

There is the labor of the struggle against the temptations which come to us from the devil, the great adversary of salvation and especially of perfection.

There is under a thousand forms what is easier to imagine than to express, what Saint Paul so well names the struggles without, *foris pugnac*.

In order to meet and support these daily attacks which at times seem to come to us from all sides at once, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle must be armed with that weapon which Saint Ignatius, in his military language calls *strenuous labor*, an *intrepid* labor, that is to say a labor that nothing frightens and nothing disconcerts.

But all these combats without are always related in some way to the combats *within* and if we look closely we can easily see that on the whole in the Christian life, and notably in the religious life, all the labor of combat may be summed up in the struggle against self; the struggle against the *ego*, the *me* disturbed, influenced, wounded or irritated by some exterior cause; the struggle against a pride which thinks itself humiliated; the struggle against a sensuality which finds itself mortified; the struggle against a jealousy which feels itself offended; the struggle against a sadness or a melancholy, against a susceptibility or an irascibility; the struggle against a discouragement or a despair; the strug-

gle, finally, against everything which in one way or another touches from without our unruly self, or our excessive love of ourself; in a word, our *egoism*: egoism, that opposition ever old and ever new to all virtue, to all holiness, to all perfection; egoism, universal and permanent cause of all evil, of all sin, of all disorder in humanity, in the individual as in society, in the cloister as in the world, in the religious as in the secular.

Therefore, there, *in self*, is always to be found the great objective of that work of struggle imposed upon the life of the Cenacle as upon every religious life, and even every Christian life that tends, in any degree whatsoever, toward the ideal of all perfection, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Combatant—that is to say, the divine *agonizing*, giving us the example of the combat or of the agony even unto death.

It is only by that continuous practise of victory over self, it is by that courageous struggle that is formed in the Cenacle in solitude, silence, and labor, that truly *strong woman* of whom the sacred Scripture in the Book of Wisdom has painted for our edification so admirable a portrait.

What is wanted in the Cenacle is not the merely

good woman, nor even the merely Christian woman. What is wanted there is the *strong woman* in the large sense of the word ; the woman who has learned to personify in herself that virility of soul which knows no sex, and may, God's grace aiding, be found in the most naturally feeble being.

Briefly, the Christian woman wanted in the Cenacle is what we might readily call the *grand Christian*, the magnanimous and intrepid Christian, willing to push to their extreme limit the practical consequences of her Christianity ; therefore decided to follow her divine Chief through all difficulties, over all obstacles whether from without or from within, and especially to follow him in the hour of his greatest trials and of his supremest combats, that is even to the bloody labor of his divine agony.

Thus, and only thus—I mean only from such material—the Cenacle will prepare for itself such women as it needs for the accomplishment of its vocation and the fecundity of its works : women *truly strong*. For as iron is converted into steel by being steeped in water, so, steeped in the living waters of trial and combat, weakness becomes

strength, strength to struggle and to conquer self more and more.

But to carry on this incessant and perpetual war, to thus steep day by day and hour by hour our human weakness in this labor of the most painful and the most difficult of all struggles, the struggle against self, there is with the divine grace a something necessary ; that something is what we call the mainspring of the combat—*courage*.

SECTION 2.—The Mainspring of the Combat : Courage.

What is courage ? and how may we demonstrate its absolute necessity in this case ?

Courage is the inner spring which puts in motion all our powers, and decides their employment and their activity. Courage (the word itself seems to express it) is the *heart in action*, or at least it is the heart conspiring with the will to meet every danger and conquer every difficulty. When this spring which moves all the faculties to display themselves in action, is wound up in the centre of our life, then it is power, it is creation, it is fruitfulness. On the contrary, when this spring is unwound and loosened, then it is dis-

couragement, it is cowardice, it is inertia, and, as a consequence, sterility.

Courage thus understood is more or less necessary in all situations of life ; it is necessary sometimes if only to enable us to bear the burden of life when misfortunes weigh us down and threaten to plunge us in despair.

Courage is especially necessary for the accomplishment of the great law of struggle. Courage and combat are two things absolutely correlative. Combat calls for courage, and courage urges to combat.

But if all combat exacts courage, there is one combat which exacts and imposes it more than any other : it is the one we have designated as the *struggle against self*. And because this struggle against self, or rather this victory of every day and every hour gained over self, must be as we have said the reality of the life of the Cenacle, it results that courage is the sovereign necessity of that life.

Courage is the indispensable armor of all the souls who have taken their place in that young militia.

We can only here indicate rapidly some of the points where it is obvious that courage is a necessity for them.

Courage is necessary to conquer the secret revolt which self-will naturally opposes to all authority that commands.

Courage is necessary to be always ready to fly from one place to another upon a simple sign of the will of Superiors, and that without any complaint or hesitation.

Courage is necessary to be capable of resolutely breaking all attachment to place, to things, to persons, and to sacrifice for the sake of doing the will of God, the happiness and charm of even the most cherished affections.

Courage is necessary to overcome the weariness, the repugnance, the disgust, we sometimes find in the accomplishment of the holiest duties, and even in conversation and intercourse with God.

Courage is necessary to seek, as the Rule requires, the occupations and charges where we will have to experience *the most humility and mortification*.

Courage is necessary to consent to live as really poor persons, and to accept not only without murmuring, but with a holy joy, all the effects of a true poverty.

Courage is necessary to embrace with perfect

resignation when God imposes it upon us,¹ the burden of suffering and the more or less heavy trial of sickness.

Courage is necessary to bear cheerfully and valiantly the still heavier weight of moral sufferings : emptiness of heart, anguish of soul, tortures of conscience, fears, sadnesses, and agonies of the desolate life.

Courage is sometimes necessary to subdue in self the inferior instincts of life which may excite even in the holiest and most angelic souls revolts hitherto unknown, or renew for them forgotten combats.

The *religieuse* of the Cenacle like every other *religieuse* but even more than every other, has need of courage to bear all those trials I have enumerated and to respond to the exigencies of her vocation.

But, why in the *religieuse* of the Cenacle this still greater necessity of courage ? I reply : it is because, destined by her vocation to aid with the priest souls subjected to the struggles and trials they meet in the course of the *Exercises*, she should not herself be an entire stranger to struggles and trials. To well understand suffering and

to compassionate the sufferer, one must have suffered one's self. And to efficaciously help souls to bear the pain of the struggle, to aid them to gain the victory, one must have bravely fought and have counted with one's own interior battles, one's personal victories.

Yes, courage, and again courage ! the *religieuse* of the Cenacle needs it everywhere and always to imitate Mary her model in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, on Calvary, and especially in the Cenacle where the mother of the Incarnate Word had to bear with the remembrance of the sufferings of her divine Son, the torture of separation from him, and the immense weight that crushed her upon this earth become for her heart since the mystery of the Ascension an inexpressible weariness.

We might show here, if it were necessary, that under the harshness of this law of struggle, and in the sufferings its daily, and sometimes hourly, accomplishment implies, there is hidden the most delicious of all joys : the joy of valiant souls, the joy of the magnanimous, unknown to whomsoever, deserting the combat, seeks in a cowardly repose an artificial happiness and impossible joys. Ah ! when in the evening, after struggles bravely

sustained and victories courageously won, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle can say to herself like a soldier returned to camp victorious after the agitations and fatigues of a long and painful combat : “My God, I thank thee : to-day I have known what it is to struggle over and over again. To-day thou hast permitted to my weakness trials I knew nothing of ; all the day long I have been as though on a battlefield where the fight kept ending only to recommence. But with the help of thy grace, I have conquered and conquered again ; My God, be forever blessed, I thank thee ; *I have not lost my day.*”

Yes, verily, when at night one can render to one’s conscience such a testimony, one may indeed taste the repose of the valiant, and fall asleep in the best of joys.

But what we have above all desired to show here is not the joy and happiness of courage, it is its necessity, its indispensable necessity in the religious life of the Cenacle.

SECTION 3.—Source and Means of Courage:
The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.

And now, how shall the *religieuse* of the Cenacle,

aided by God's grace, obtain that courage of the brave capable of resisting, of fighting, and of conquering ; of conquering every enemy and of conquering herself? for, if that courage, victorious in all personal struggles, must come to us especially from God, it may also come in a measure from ourselves ; that is to say, from the means we employ to acquire it.

What, then, is the living source in which the *religieuse* of the Cenacle must plunge to strengthen her courage ?

We reply in one word: The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.* That is the source wherein

* Saint Ignatius, in his celebrated solitude of Meanresa, noted the methods and means employed by himself upon himself, to operate with the help of divine grace the courageous and decisive work of his own transformation. He also noted carefully the diverse and contrary impressions he experienced during that laborious course under the different or opposite influences of the good and of the evil spirit. Especially, he arranged his meditations and contemplations so as to form an order of exercises, or a plan of wonderful simplicity, which, from the fundamental Meditation to the Last End, leads the soul by degrees to the final Contemplation of Divine Laws.

The great ascetic wrote all his meditations, contemplations, and annotations, in a little book to which, inspired by the ideas and remembrances of his military life, he gave the name of *Spiritual Exercises*. The series of these exercises which have effected so many conversions and incited to so much holiness, is divided into *four weeks*, or parts, and compass the Great Retreat of thirty or forty days.

We cannot here develop their admirable mechanism and their marvellous harmony ; we would like, however, to give an idea of it.

were steeped the souls of those courageous and strong Christian women who, with the holy apostle-founder, laid the first stones of the Institute. That founder himself revealed to his little religious family the generous spirit and the wise methods of those Exercises. And ever since, it is in the serious practise of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius that the *religieuse* of the Cenacle learns the art of *conquering self! and of regulating her life uninfluenced by any inordinate affection.*

To those who are desirous of becoming acquainted with the whole and with the detail of those exercises, we may say: a first glance shows that what constitutes the basis of them, their substance and marrow, may be expressed by this simple formula which resumes and abridges all: *to learn how to conquer self and to exercise that knowledge*; that is to overcome in self all inordinate affections, to make them, by force of conquering them, orderly, and by thus doing to assure the salvation of one's soul and procure the glory of God. There is the whole of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius!

Certainly there are in these Exercises diversity and multiplicity of occupations. Or, more cor-

rectly speaking, there is in their whole an order, a succession of meditations, of prayers, examinations, reflections, and contemplations. But throughout and incessantly that diversity resolves itself into the *unity*: conquer self, and again conquer self, and always conquer self.

The Exercises of the four weeks so different in their immediate object, all converge towards that single end which dominates the whole and the details.

In the First Week the object is to *conquer self* in order to destroy in self the empire of sin, and to force the passions, even the most unruly, to resume their subordinate place.

In the Second Week it is to *conquer self*, in order to rise progressively by the imitation of Jesus Chfist, in spite of all the resistances of nature, towards the divine ideal, and to mount from victory to victory even to the third degree of humility.

In the Third Week it is to *conquer self*, in order to follow Jesus Christ's agonizing in Gethsemane, humiliated in Jerusalem, crucified on Calvary, and to embrace with him the plenitude of suffering and sacrifice.

In the Fourth Week it is again *conquer self*, in

order to assure in self the absolute reign of Divine love over all terrestrial affections, and to ascend daily and step by step, against all the attractions of nature, to those sublime summits of the Christian and religious life where love invites us, and to find after the labor of struggle the rest of the conqueror.

Thus, from post to post of this laborious and warlike career, there is always question of one same thing : *conquer self*. This explains why the great spiritual master asks of every soul formed in his school, or, more correctly speaking, the valiant captain demands of every soldier trained by these Exercises, the three-fold courage which may be resumed in these terms : the courage to conquer, by an absolute victory, the *flesh* and all that is of the flesh ; the courage to conquer, by an absolute victory, the *will* and all that pertains to self-will—the world and all that is of the world ; a triple victory containing under its three-fold aspect what is the substantial basis and the supreme object of the Exercises.

Therefore, whoever accepts to travel to the end, without ever turning back, this road—that is to say, this course of victories—comes out armed in the present with an indomitable courage to meet

the combats of the future. The fact alone of the courageous accomplishment of these Exercises in all their holy austerity attests already in him or her who attempts to accomplish them a certain measure of courage ; military courage which multiplies and grows by its own exercise.

The *religieuse* of the Cenacle must submit to this trial and run this race ; she must, during thirty consecutive days, temper her weakness and her natural timidity in this fountain of strength and courage. And certainly, it must be admitted, thirty days of spiritual exercises—that is, thirty days of meditations, of prayers, of examinations, of contemplations, of solitude, and of silence, with that relative amount of mortifications and austerities which Saint Ignatius advises and obedience consecrates—is for every human weakness a burden quite heavy enough to bear. Very well ! the woman and even the young girl vowed to the generous life of the Cenacle, must bear that burden without faltering.

And because she experiments upon herself the fortifying virtue of those Exercises, she will be ready to aid other souls to make the courageous trial of them. And so what will have been for

herself an instrument of perfection and sanctification, will become in behalf of the souls Providence will confide to her charity and solicitude, an instrument of apostolate and devotedness.

This last consideration leads us to what we have called the second element of the life of the Cenacle : the *apostolate* by *devotedness*, or devotedness in the apostolate ; in other words, after having seen what the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should be for herself, we will learn what she should be for others by means of her apostolic works and her fraternal self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER II.

THE APOSTOLATE IN THE CENACLE BY DEVOTEDNESS.

SECTION 1.—The Apostolic Mission of the Cenacle.

It is here that the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should, as Saint Ignatius enjoins upon his children, convince herself well of the fact that Providence has marked the Society of which she is a member with the character of the apostolate, and has given it, in its sphere, a truly apostolic mission.

In the first place, this is what is declared most explicitly and clearly in the first paragraph of the Summary of the Constitutions of the Society: "The object of this Society is, for *each* of its members, not only to labor with the help of divine grace to assure her own salvation and perfection, but also, aided by the same divine grace, to exert herself with all her strength for the salvation and perfection of her neighbor by the giving of Spirit-

ual Retreats and the teaching of Christian Doctrine, in the measure of her capacity and condition."

There we have the apostolic character of the Society plainly defined, and defined for each member: no one is excepted, not even the lay-sister whose more obscure ministries concur in the general working of the Institute, and are appointed in view of the exalted end of the apostolate.

We might, for this point, confine ourselves to the text of the summary we have just cited, and which determines in so precise a manner the double object of the Institute. But it is necessary to insist at greater length, in order to show how the life of the Cenacle, characterized by the labor of combat, is none the less characterized by the labor of the apostolate. There is an ensemble of things and of circumstances which conspire to make evident this apostolic character of the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle.

The Institute, we have said, was born near the tomb of a great *apostle*—Saint Francis Regis, of the Society of Jesus. The apostolic spirit exhales from that tomb with the perfume of sanctity. Therefore, what more natural than that a society



which placed its cradle beside an apostle's tomb, should be inspired with the apostolic spirit?

Moreover, as we have seen in tracing the origin of the Institute, the first idea of the little Society came from the soul and the heart of a man-apostle, of an apostle humble if we regard the theatre of his apostolate, but great by his apostolic aspirations and ambitions; of an apostle who could say, using the Saviour's words: "I am come to bring fire upon earth, and what do I desire, if not that that fire be kindled?" Was it not evidently that need of spreading around him the fire with which he himself burned that gave the apostle the thought of creating a little apostolic legion, having for object to extend and multiply the action of his own apostolate? And the holy woman, whom God was pleased to associate with his zeal, the venerated Mother Thérèse, who still lives to bear witness to these facts, did she not also have a heart burning with the sacred fire and with the apostolic flames? And if it may be said that the true character of institutions and works is revealed by the signs that marked their cradle, how, beholding the cradle of this Society, can we doubt that the character of the apostolate be its true

character, or that the name of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* be its right name, attesting by the baptism of the work the character—the circumstances of its birth announced?

What shows particularly and in a startling manner the apostolic tendency in the young Institute, is the name it bears of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*, and the profession it makes of honoring and imitating in her life in the Cenacle, *Mary, Mother of Divine Grace*, and *Queen of the Apostles*.

In that life of the Cenacle what was there in the hearts of the Apostles, and especially in the heart of their august *Queen*, if not an immense, an ineffable need of extending the reign of Jesus Christ throughout the earth?

And when the great mystery of Pentecost was accomplished; when the Holy Ghost descended upon the assembled Apostles under the divinely significative form of *tongues of fire*; when he had planted in the heart of all that fire of divine love which was soon to embrace the whole earth; who can doubt that that fire of love was a hundred times more ardent, and that flames of the apostolate a hundred times brighter in the heart of Mary than in the hearts of all the Apostles? Ah! no

human intelligence will ever be able to understand, and no human voice will ever be able to tell, that need the heart of the Queen of the Apostles felt, to cast into the hearts of all men sparks of the fire with which she herself was burning; neither will human intelligence ever understand, or human voice be capable of relating all the apostolic conquests she aspired to for the glorification of her divine Son. Mary in the Cenacle, especially on the day of Pentecost, was the most ardent fire of love it is possible to conceive of, and felt the most imperious need of an apostolate it is possible to imagine.

Hence, how can we suppose that a Society which has for its principal object the imitation of Mary in the Cenacle, does not experience something of that inexpressible need of apostolic extension and conquest which filled the heart of her whom the Church has well named *Regina Apostolorum*: Queen of the Apostles?

Consequently, since the hour of its birth the young Institute has not ceased to justify its name by doing what that name signifies. The breath of the apostolate which passed over its cradle, has not ceased a single day to animate the Society of the

Cenacle and even to grow with its growth. That apostolic spirit may have shown itself under forms more or less tangible, and by manifestations more or less apparent ; but it *is in* the Institute alive as at the commencement—even more alive than at the commencement. In proportion as the Society progresses and develops, it shows in its life the sign, more and more easy of recognition that appeared at its birth : namely, the authentic sign of a religious institution wherein each member while sanctifying herself labors to sanctify others, and to the holy ambition of causing Jesus Christ, the ideal of all perfection, to reign in her own heart joins the ambition, not less holy, of causing him to reign in all hearts, and, if possible, in all nations.

Besides, it is this character of the apostolate that the Bishops and the Sovereign Pontiff have particularly recognized and approved in the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle ; and the little religious family honored by this name so beautiful with a holy beauty and so perfectly significative, may say, attesting the mission confided to it : “ I am come to bring fire upon earth, the sacred fire that burned the heart of our Divine Mother in the



Cenacle ; and what do I desire if it be not that that fire be kindled, that it penetrate deeper and deeper all hearts wherein it has a right to reign, and wherein it is my ambition to cause it to reign more and more absolutely ?”

SECTION 2.

MEANS AND FORMS OF THE APOSTOLATE IN THE
CENACLE.

SECTION 2.—Means and Forms of the Apostolate in the Cenacle.

Thus, in the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle, everything combines to show its true apostolic character and destiny.

But what are the special means and the principal forms of that apostolate ?

To this question we will reply by three words : The apostolate of the *Exercises*, the apostolate of *doctrine*, the apostolate of *example*. Three means of influence and action indicated in the first rule of the Summary cited above.

In the first place, the first and principal instrument of apostolic action in the Cenacle is the Exercises of Saint Ignatius. And here we mean, not the Exercises one practises one's self, but the Exercises one aids others to practise.

Just as it is true that the life of the Cenacle is arranged with regard to the apostolate, so is it

true that in the Cenacle the Book of Exercises is the great instrument of apostolic action. It is the instrument which the venerable founder, Father Terme, placed in the hands of the first Mothers of the young Institute; an instrument intended not only for the work of their own sanctification, but also for that of the sanctification of others. We may certainly conclude that it was Father Terme's intention that the Exercises which have taught the *religieuse* the courageous practise of the *combat* should be her best and her principal instrument in the practise of her apostolate.

Therefore, it is her duty to labor to acquire as complete as possible a practical knowledge of those holy Exercises. Not only should she acquaint herself with their text, their arrangement, their method, their entire strategy; not only should she study the formulas, the annotations, the prescriptions, so as to make her retreatants follow their regular and progressive march; but especially she should understand herself, in order to make others understand their generous spirit; that vivifying spirit which penetrates their details and their whole, and makes of those Exercises, not (as some have dared to say) an *automatic mechanism*, but a

sort of *organism*, or, so to speak, an *animated mechanism*; a machine in one sense, but a machine put in motion and working by the impulsion of a living breath.

Further, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should learn to adapt the Exercises to the diversity of the dispositions and needs of the souls called to make trial of them and to gather their fruits; and, to acquire this practical wisdom, she should apply herself especially to the difficult science of the *discernment of spirits*—that is, of the influences of the *good*, and of the *evil, spirit*—that, according to the remark of the great ascetic, act in contrary directions, alternatively and sometimes simultaneously, upon the souls that courageously commence the career of the Exercises. In short, without pretending herself to penetrate the intimate mystery of consciences (which is the proper work of the priest, the confessor or director), she will discreetly aid the priest in the measure he will judge suitable, to apply to souls the remedies best proportioned to their strength or to their infirmity.

Especially when the priest, as often happens, can make only rare appearances in the solitude of the retreatants, the *religieuse*, his humble and

devoted auxiliary, will be always there ready to offer them the assistance of a fraternal charity in the difficult moments when they seem about to fail in the trial, and to bend beneath the double burden of solitude and weariness. In a word, she will be to those souls, the care of whom she shares with the priest, an angel of light and consolation, always eager to place herself at their service and to respond to their call.

Moreover, there will be profit for herself in the holy communications she will have with the souls confided to her care. She will perfect herself more and more in the art of doing them good, also in the use of the Exercises ; she will learn in contact with generous souls the secret of urging them, and herself with them, higher and higher towards the summits of perfection ; and the contact with weak and infirm souls, even the weakest and the most infirm, will teach her the secret of strengthening them, and of strengthening herself with them in the way of salvation.*

*Certain persons too ignorant of the reality of things, and prejudiced against this specialty of the apostolate which they did not understand, have cried out against the pretended *direction of souls by the religieuse of the Retreat* ; and people have laughed a little at what they call the *direction of the woman by the woman*.

Such should be in the hands of the Society of the Cenacle, the use and the manipulation of its especial instrument of apostolate. And, we are happy to affirm it, in this case, what *is* harmonizes perfectly with what *ought to be*. Since the blessed hour when the venerated founder armed the young Society with that little book so marvellously efficacious for the salvation and perfection of souls, it may be said that, thanks to the constant, and even daily, practise of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius in all the Houses of the Retreat, that spiritual strategy, before almost unknown to the greater part of the Christian souls of our times, has become familiar to a large number. And we do not doubt that the holy transforming action of those Exercises will continue to increase among the Christian women of this century, in proportion as the Society of the Cenacle extends its apostolic sphere and influence.

To hear these unjust and frivolous accusations, one might suppose the *religieuse* of the Retreat performed the function of the priest, substituted herself to the director if not to the confessor. Nothing is more false than this allegation. In the Cenacle, as everywhere, the fundamental direction of souls and the intimate knowledge of souls, in the true sense of the terms, belong only to the priest. The *religieuses* of the Retreat do not *direct* souls, they *aid* in their direction; they are not directresses, they are auxiliaries of the directors. Such is the truth; the rest is pure imagination.

To the experimental knowledge of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should join *the teaching of Christian Doctrine*; that is, of the truth revealed to the world by the Incarnate Word—Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This is prescribed by the first principle rule of the Summary of the Constitutions indicating the object of the Institute. After having said that each member of the Society should labor for the salvation and perfection of souls by the giving of spiritual *Retreats*, the rule immediately adds: “And by the teaching of *Christian Doctrine*.”

By that apostolate of Doctrine the function of the *religieuse* of the Retreat is related as closely as possible to the ministry of the Apostles, and especially to the function of Mary in the Cenacle.

According to all likelihood and all probability Mary in the Cenacle taught the Apostles the plenitude of that doctrine which they themselves had the vocation to teach to the entire world; thus she preluded, *she* already full of grace and light, that great illumination which the Holy Spirit was to accomplish in them all in the mystery of Pentecost.

The Saviour before ascending into Heaven had

let fall upon His Apostles these words as sovereignly imperative as they were divinely prophetic : “ Go, teach ye all nations ; you shall be witnesses unto meeven to the uttermost part of the earth . . . Go, stay you in the city, *sedete in civitate*, till you be endued with power from on high for the accomplishment of your great mission.” *

Now, what was it the Apostles desired while they stayed in the city and were assembled in the Cenacle to await the accomplishment of the divine promise ? What did they desire especially in the solemn hour of the descent of the Holy Ghost, when divine light illumined their intelligence, and divine love burned in their hearts ? What they desired, what they aspired to, was to respond to the call of their Master ; it was to fulfil His divine commands, by teaching all nations the doctrine of Him who had said of Himself : “ I am the Truth.” And, on the morning of Pentecost that need of teaching the truth, of extending, of propagating the truth of the Christ or the Christ-Truth, was not only a need, it was an enthusiasm ; and that ambition was no longer only an ardent ambition, it was a sacred *inebriation*.

**Ite, docete omnes gentes.* Matth. XXVIII. : 19 ; Acts I. : 8 ; Luke XXIV. : 49.

In that apostolic assembly all whose members had the vocation to teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ to the entire universe, Mary, the divine mother, was Queen, *Queen of the Apostles* ; and as their Queen she was the great inspirer of their apostolate, not only equalling them but surpassing them all in the need and ambition to see the doctrine brought upon earth by her divine son revealed to the world. Therefore, how is it possible to doubt that Mary in the Cenacle labored herself to teach the Apostles the divine doctrine ? And who, better than she, with the Holy Spirit, could reveal to them all the mystery they had as yet too little understood ?

The *religieuse* of the Cenacle, to imitate her mother and her model, the Queen of the Apostles, ought then to teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ *according to the manner of her strength and her condition*. She should render herself capable of distributing the bread of truth to all souls, to those at least who come to ask it of her ; and so she will be ready to enlighten with the torch of holy doctrines all the ignorances that seek the true light. Ah ! those ignorances of the Christian doctrine, voluntary or not ; how many of them there are

nowadays even in the very midst of Christianity, in all conditions, in all ages, under all forms, and under all costumes ! Ignorance of children and ignorance of the aged ; ignorance of the little and ignorance of the great ; ignorance of the poor and ignorance of the rich ; ignorance in rags and ignorance in purple mantle ; ignorance in the hovel and ignorance in the castle ; ignorance of the people and ignorance of the princes ; and, to resume all, ignorance of the unlettered and of the self-styled learned. Since the first propagation of Christianity, that is to say, since the preaching of the divine word by the Apostles, never in any century more than in this which calls itself the enlightened century, has there been seen so great and so universal an ignorance of the Christian truths, and sometimes of the most elementary truths in the purely natural order, and this even among the baptized generations.

The fitness of the life of the Cenacle to the needs of the century is more than ever apparent in the present hour. Since a law of ill fortune—a *nefarious law* as it has been well called—condemns multitudes of children in our fields and in our cities to the ignorance, in some sort fatal, of the

fundamental truths of Christianity, and even of all religion, a new institute vowed to the teaching of Christian doctrine bears evidently the sign of a providential mission, and by that sign proves itself to be in perfect harmony with the needs of the present times. It realizes something of that divine *opportuneness* by which Providence adapts the relief to the necessity, and for the new evolutions of the social life raises up new institutions, that is, new creations or new manifestations of the Catholic life.

The Institute of the Cenacle does not, it is true, create boarding-schools and academies wherein to teach with the other branches, which a finished education exacts, the Christian religion. It leaves to other institutes that function which is also of the highest importance. The instruction given in the Cenacle has no other object than the Christian doctrine. And more, this instruction has not the regularity of a continued course. It has no other regularity than that of being always at the service of the ignorance which claims it. It adapts itself to circumstances and to situations. It begins and ends with the needs that present

themselves and the necessities that impose while awaiting other needs and other necessities.

Therefore, the teaching of the *religieuse* of the Cenacle is perfectly defined; it has its specialty, its particular object, its determined place. Yes, to catechise; again to catechise; to catechise individually and collectively, that is to say to instruct one soul in private or several souls at a time. Such is the score of teaching the modest but efficacious and Christianly fruitful part of the *religieuse* of the Cenacle.

Her vocation, it is true, demands of her "to be ready to go to different places and to live in any country of the world where there is hope of rendering a greater service to God and to Our Lady, and of laboring more usefully for the salvation of souls." *

We may even catch sight of the moment in the future more or less near, when the Institute following the example of apostles will plant its tent even in the most remote countries of the earth, and will extend its apostolic action into the midst of pagan generations; and there, as in the place of its cradle, as in Paris, as in Rome, and as where-

* General Plan of the Institute.

soever the Institute has found a foothold in France and in Europe, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle will be what she is by vocation and by profession, the *auxiliary* of the man-apostle, even of the apostle-missionary. There, also, she will have her own line of teaching ; she will teach ; she will catechise under her hospitable roof those who, having had no inheritance of doctrine, will come to ask of her the revelation of the great mystery.

To the *religieuse* of the Cenacle it belongs, then, or rather it is incumbent upon her, to be profoundly imbued with the true doctrine of Christianity ; to be acquainted with its essential foundations and its principal sources. Also should she be armed against the sophisms which error throughout the camp of the world opposes to the truth, and, the case occurring, should she be able to reply to the objections which may be made to her by those *learned ignorances* of which we have before spoken. She will have the legitimate ambition of being an instructed Christian, and instructed notably in her Christianity. She should possess in its plenitude the catechism which is the abridgment of Christian doctrine, and, as it were, the summary of healthy theology ; not content

with knowing and making known its text, she should be piously ambitious to penetrate herself and to penetrate others with its essential spirit.

Thus the *religieuses* of the Cenacle will make of their holy dwellings hearth-stones of light and heat. And each individual *religieuse* will be a living torch; a torch at once brilliant with the light of truth and burning with the sacred fire of love, as was, according to the Gospel, Saint John the Baptist in the desert: "He was a burning and a shining light, *lucerna lucens et ardens*." (John V.: 35.) And they all will carry, everywhere and always, with the light of doctrine and instruction, that other light which has the double power of showing forth the beauty of the true and of causing the good to be loved, and which we call the light of *good example*.

Yes, in order that the apostolate of the *Exercises* and the apostolate of *Doctrine* produce the fulness of their salutary effect, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle must unite to those two apostolates the most persuasive of all—the one we have just named—the apostolate of *good example*.

She should offer to observers the type of that perfection sought for in the labor of the Exercises;

she should be like a *living* doctrine, and the holiness and the divinity of the Christianity taught by her words should shine in her person. Finally, she should be, by the example of her virtues, an uninterrupted sermon, and, even in her silence, an ever-speaking Word.

There is in true holiness a radiance that enlightens and at the same time warms souls more than the most brilliant, the most ardent and the most fascinating eloquence, with all its power and all its prestige, can possibly do.

Example is the greatest eloquence, and an ancient said truly: "Words fly away; examples lead companions—*verba volant; exempla trahunt.*" Example is the great light which shows the truth and manifests the good. Example is persuasion itself. Example is at once enlightening, attractive, and persuasive. This is because we are by nature imitators; and we are progressive because we are imitators. Thence, in humanity, the incomparable ascendancy of example.

This pioneer of example is such that often even inanimate things exercise a sort of irresistible domination over us. Who is ignorant of the powerful influence produced upon souls by pic-

tures, statues, the masterpieces of art, to enlighten, move and, sometimes, persuade? How many, beholding in a picture the angelic face of Saint Aloysius or of Saint Stanislaus de Kostha have been inspired by it with the love of purity and virginity! How many, admiring the heroic features of our illustrious apostle, Saint Francis Xavier, have conceived the generous ambition of the conquering apostolate! And, also, how many, while contemplating the transfigured countenance of the seraphic Theresa, have been ignited with the holy passion that possessed her entire art—the love of Jesus Christ!

Thus, before simple pictures traced by the genius of art, such a soul has been able to decide : I will be chaste. Another : I will be an apostle. Another : I will be a religious. Like Louis de Gonzague: I will love purity; like Francis Xavier: I will love souls ; like Theresa: I will love Jesus Christ.

Such is the sovereign ascendancy exercised over souls by example, even the example which does not speak, which does not feel, which does not live. What, then, is it when example presents itself to us with a living physiognomy ; and

especially when it is personified in the being that resembles us the most, and particularly in a being deeply loved !

Therefore, happy is he who has seen near to, were it but one single time in his life, the face of a saint ! In spite of himself, one carries away from that blessed vision a souvenir, a perfume that embalms and edifies the whole soul ; an indescribable something salutary and fortifying that remains in one's life to be an impulsion as gentle, as strong, toward that sanctity whose ideal one has once seen incarnate in a human being.

May the *religieuse* of the Cenacle never forget this, for her, truly sovereign duty of her profession. Whether she practises the apostolate by the *teaching* of doctrine ; whether she practises it by the giving of the *Exercises*, let her never forget that she is bound to aid souls by the ascendancy of an example capable of giving them at once with the revelation of the true and the impulsion towards the good—the love of holiness.

We ourselves have more than once had occasion to verify it; the real fruit of a retreat made in the Cenacle, or elsewhere, is quite frequently in almost exact proportion to the impression of virtue and

sanctity left in the soul by the person God used as his instrument to aid that soul to run the holy race of the Exercises. And the remembrance of that impression already in the present so salutary to the retreatant, remains with her as a defence and safeguard amid the temptations and dangers, of her whole life.

Happy then the *religieuse* of the Cenacle who, by the radiance of piety that escapes from her person, she seems to say to the soul she has the mission to urge upward to perfection while leading it nearer to God: "Look, and imitate the model that is shown to you; aspice, *et fac secundum exemplar quod tibi monstratum est.*"

Who can excuse herself from practising this third apostolate under pretext of her incompetency or her inaptitude? If, to suppose the case, a *religieuse* of the Cenacle, has some reason to say that she is incapable of aiding souls to make the Exercises of Saint Ignatius; if she may say that from want of sufficient knowledge she is incapable of teaching the Christian doctrine; can she say that she is incapable of giving good example by the simple and sincere practise of the virtues of her state? What *religieuse* can declare herself

unable to produce upon a soul, by her mere intercourse with that soul, an impression of holiness or at least of virtue ?

On this point there is no legitimate excuse possible ; and the most humble lay-sister herself cannot offer as pretext her inability or her incapacity. What one can do, she can do ; and we add, all are under obligation to do ; yes, all. And we can say of the *religieuse*-apostle in the Cenacle, what blessed Peter Lefebvre, the companion of Saint Ignatius, said of the man-apostle in the Society of Jesus : “ He should be everywhere and always an apostle, even when he is silent.” In the same way the *religieuse* of the Cenacle will be everywhere and always an apostle ; she will speak even in her silence, by bearing in herself, everywhere and always, the radiance of the truth and of the holiness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

SECTION 3.—The Mainspring of the Apostolate in the Cenacle: Devotedness.

As we have seen, the Institute of the Cenacle has, to fulfil its apostolic mission, three principal means : The *Exercises* of Saint Ignatius ; the *teaching* of the *Christian Doctrine* ; and the ascendancy of *good example*.

But what is the spring needed to put this triple apostolate in motion in order to obtain efficacious results?

There is something necessary to the success of all apostolates—a something which nothing else can replace; a something which, while giving to the Institute what may be called its exterior form is, as it were, the mainspring of its apostolic power—that something, everywhere great and fruitful, is named *devotedness*.

Devotedness to others is the correlative of war against self. To the labor of the combat corresponds devotedness in the apostolate.

What is the necessity of practising devotedness in the Cenacle?

What is the *secret* of the devotedness practised in the life of the Cenacle?

What should be the *characteristics* of the devotedness in the Cenacle?

What are the *models* of devotedness the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should imitate?

What is the *source* whence the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should draw her devotedness?

In the first place, it should be clearly understood that the necessity of devotedness is imposed by the

very nature and requirements of the apostolate. It has been well said : "The apostolate is the gift of the truth made to others;" yes, provided we add that the apostolate is also the gift of self made to others and to the truth. Devotedness and the apostolate are united one to the other by an indissoluble bond; by a chain absolutely infrangible.

The apostolate, to suppose such a thing, separated from devotedness, is no longer aught else than a more or less egotistical action; it is no longer the apostolate; or, to express it differently, it is the apostolate distorted and turned against its object. Let us add that the apostolate without a measure of that devotedness which in Christian language is especially called *sacrifice*, is sterility. Therefore the inevitable alternative is: either to carry into the practise of the apostolate a sincere devotedness, or to renounce the hope of apostolic fecundity.

Devotedness, which is the universal law of religious and Christian life, is in a special manner the law of the Cenacle because the apostolate is the very life of the Society; and devotedness is the indispensable condition of every apostolate.

It is the necessary germ of all fecundity, and, most particularly, of all supernatural fecundity.

What guarantees the supernatural fecundity of every apostolate, be it that of man or of woman, is not the renown it obtains, nor the talent employed in, nor the glory gained from, it; it is the devotedness practised in it, the renunciation brought to it, the sacrifices made for it. There is no other really efficacious way of producing *supernaturally* than the one chosen by Jesus Christ, the author of our supernatural life. The generation of all supernatural life in humanity is entirely the work of a *divine devotedness*—that is to say, of the sacrifice freely consummated by the Redeemer, *Father of the ages to come*.

Therefore, if the *religieuse* of the Cenacle desires to accomplish efficaciously the apostolate Providence has given her and her Institute imposes upon her, she must accept resolutely, and without hesitation, the essential condition of all apostolic life, and notably of every fruitful apostolate. She must, on all occasions and in all places, consider herself as a devoted servant; devoted first to Jesus Christ, and devoted to souls for the sake of Jesus Christ. And just as the formula of her personal

life and perfection is contained in these words : "Combat; combat again; combat always;" so the formula of her apostolic life and fruitfulness should be: "Devote myself; devote myself again; devote myself always."

Such, for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle, is the necessity of self-devotion. But what is the secret of her devotedness? What is its intimate nature? In a word, what must she do in order to devote herself?

Effective devotedness consists in the reaction against egotism, that is to say, against the excessive or exclusive love of self.

To devote one's self means to give one's self, to communicate one's self, to expend one's self, lavishly for others. Now, in order to give one's self and to expend one's self for others, it is necessary to react against the egotistic force, that is, against the inordinate inclination which leads us to give ourselves and to expend ourselves exclusively for ourselves. In order to give one's self to others, it is necessary to know how to refuse much to one's self. To enter the souls of others by fraternal communication, we must come out of ourselves by personal abnegation. And to give life to others,

we must die to self. The general rule is: Each man produces in others according to the measure in which he dies to himself. In this respect, fruitfulness in the order of grace is the same as in the order of nature. In the natural order the grain of wheat to produce must commence by dying. The Saviour Himself has declared it: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth *alone*" in an absolute sterility, "*nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram mortuum fuerit, ipsam solum manet.*" "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit; *si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert.*"*

Such is the sovereign law of the two worlds, the natural and the supernatural. All being derives the germ of its fecundity from its death. This is the innate nature of things confirmed by the author of those two worlds, that is by the Word Creator and Redeemer.

By the light of this truth it is easy for each one to know the value of his devotedness and the measure in which he devotes himself. The measure in which one devotes one's self will always be that in which one comes out of one's self and dies to

* St. John XII. : 24-25

one's self ; and that measure in the renunciation of self and death to self reveals to every apostle the measure of his apostolic fecundity.

The *religieuse* of the Cenacle in particular will find in this rule at once the value of her acts of devotedness and the measure of their fruitfulness for the good of souls and the glory of God. She will be so much the better qualified for the practise of true devotedness as she will the more carefully observe in the acts which put her soul in relation with other souls, the following prescriptions :

In every act of zeal, renounce and die to all self-will, in order to obey only the will of God manifested by the will of the Superiors.

In every apostolic work of whatever nature it may be, inspire one's self, neither by the sympathies nor the repugnances of nature, but by the single desire of saving souls and procuring God's glory.

In every apostolate, great or small, brilliant or obscure, be attached by the will to *nothing*, neither to a place, nor to an employment, nor to a person ; but have only one ambition—to serve others by renouncing self, and to every call of obedience be

always ready to respond with the prophet : "Here I am, send me ; *ecce ego, mitte me,*" to the east or to the west, to the south or to the north ; I am here, ready to obey. And if one has the free choice, prefer the places, the employments, and the ministries, where there is more to do in the renunciation of self and the dying to self.

Finally, in every exercise of the apostolate, in presence of every work to accomplish and of every service to render, repeat by the action even more than with the voice, these words that fell from the lips of the Mother of God in the hour of the great mystery, and which should be the true device of the Cenacle : "*Ecce ancilla Domini* ; behold the handmaid of the Lord."

We are acquainted with the sovereign necessity and the intimate secret of the devotedness the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should bring to the exercise of her apostolate.

We now ask what characteristics that devotedness should have ?

We reply : That devotedness should be *universal* ; it should be *perpetual* ; it should be *absolute*.

Yes, devotedness in the Cenacle should be *universal* ; that is, it should embrace without any

exception all that pertains to the vocation and to the functions imposed by the vocation.

It is not for the apostle-*religieuse* to devote herself only in *this* or in *that* ; it is for her to devote herself in *everything*. Her devotedness cannot, without infidelity to the vocation that claims it, say : "I will go so far and no farther ; here is my limit, here is my boundary, I will not cross it." The devotedness her vocation demands of her has no boundaries, and she has no right to fix its limits. There is no reason why she should choose for her self-devotion this place or that place, this employment or that other, this thing or that other thing, while the vocation she has freely chosen obliges her to devote herself everywhere and in all things.

This practical problem which at first sight seems impossible, will have been solved by the *religieuse* of the Cenacle when she can render to herself the testimony, that in no one of the acts that put her in communication with others has she ever *sought*, directly or indirectly, *self*, that is, her own satisfaction.

In reality, the inevitable alternative, the fatal dilemma of the apostolic life is this : the term of

our action is in one's self, or outside of one's self. Either we act for ourselves, only for ourselves; or we act for another, whether that other be our neighbor, or God, or God and our neighbor at once. In the first case, our action is egotistical action; in the second case it is devoted action. Whence it results that if the *religieuse* of the Cenacle in the apostolic action *never* seeks herself her action is always devoted and she truly practises *universal* devotedness.

Besides being universal this devotedness should be *perpetual*. To devote one's self a day is well. To devote one's self a month is better. To devote one's self a year, and even several years, is better still. It is not yet sufficient for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle. Her vocation, her law, her promise, exact more; and the formula of her life is this: *devote one's self always*. For her, each year is a year of devotedness; each week a week of devotedness; each day a day of devotedness; each hour even is an hour of devotedness, and each stroke of the clock marking the hours that pass, strikes always for her the hour to devote herself. Because, literally, all the hours, as well as all the days, all the weeks, all the months and all the years she has

given—nay, she has *vowed*—to God and to her neighbor.

To universality and perpetuity the *religieuse* of the Cenacle must join the *absolute* in her devotedness.

Certainly it is possible to devote one's self in the world, and sometimes admirable examples of devotedness are there met with. But, ordinarily, in the world people devote themselves partially, not fully; devote themselves conditionally, not absolutely. In the world there are reserves and conditions in one's devotedness.

In the Cenacle there is call to devote one's self without reserve, that is to say without excepting anything, neither health, nor even life; consequently, to devote one's self fully and totally. In the Cenacle there is obligation to devote one's self *absolutely*, that is to say, unconditionally, without expecting any return other than that God promises to his devoted servants when he tells them: "I will be your reward." The *religieuse* who would pretend to put conditions to her devotedness—conditions of earthly compensation or recompense, of gratitude from souls, of esteem of superiors (conditions more or less egotistical, of self-love and of personal

satisfaction), would by that very fact fail in the true devotedness she has made promise of, that is in the *absolute* in devotedness.

It does not enter into the plan of this work to recount the grandeur, the sublimity, the beauty, the value and the merit of a devotedness clothed with those three qualities of universality, of perpetuity, and of absoluteness; and we hasten to show from what models, from what types, the devotedness of the Cenacle should be copied.

To encourage and guide itself in the practise of devotedness the society has need of models, and especially of *a* model to imitate; for, as we have before said, we are in everything essentially imitators.

Glancing at the several types of devotedness the *religieuse* of Notre Dame du Cenacle may regard in order to imitate, we can say to those *religieuses*

Your model is God himself, the infinite of perfection; God, who created for us all this visible world by an absolutely disinterested act of love, and who has loved us so far "as to give us his only begotten Son." *

**Sic Deus dilexit mundum, ut Filium suum unigenitum daret.*
(St. John III. : 12.)

Your model, it is Jesus Christ our Lord, who has loved us and has delivered himself, that is to say, has devoted himself for us, so far as to die in the plenitude of suffering and of sacrifice.*

Your model, it is the Church, the Catholic Church, the Mother the most devoted to all her children and to the entire human race; the Catholic Church, associated from its cradle even to the present day with all the devotedness and all the sacrifices of Jesus Christ himself.

Your model, it is the apostles, especially the first Twelve Apostles who all carried devotedness to Jesus Christ and to souls, even to the sacrifice of their blood; and, after the first Apostles, all those who have marked by acts of devotedness each one of their steps in the apostolic career.

Your model, we can add, is all the greatest saints, who have left behind them more or less illustrious monuments of their devotedness to Jesus Christ, to the Church, and to souls.

We might insist upon the rights all those models of devotedness have to provoke generous imitation.

But the *religieuses* of the Cenacle have especially for their imitation the model which is their own,

* *Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me.* (Galat. II. : 20.)

which they may justly call *their* model, namely : *Mary, Mother of God and of men ; Mary, Mother of Divine grace, Queen of the Apostles ; Mary, the true Superior of the little Society, and in virtue of that title the mould of the flock ; forma gregis.*

Consequently, it belongs to the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate in all the situations of her life that sublime and fragrant example of devotedness.

It belongs to her to imitate Mary in the temple, still so young, and already consecrating her whole life to the service of God. From the moment of her Immaculate Conception, at least we may so believe, she was already entirely surrendered to the Holy Trinity, and her offering in the temple was only the manifestation and the visible confirmation of the offering of herself already made in an invisible manner.

It is the part of the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate Mary in the solemn hour of the Incarnation, when in presence of that ineffable mystery, seeing herself associated with the sufferings and the sacrifice of the Incarnate Word as well as with his grandeur, his dignity, and his office, she pronounced the words that were to create a new

world: "*Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*"

It is the part of the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate Mary in Bethlehem, in Egypt, in Nazareth. Who can tell all the devotedness Mary lavished upon Jesus and Joseph in those different places?

It is for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate Mary in the public and apostolic life of her divine Son. Here also, who can tell how entirely she, with the holy women, devoted herself to Jesus, and how completely she placed herself at his service in everything?

It is for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate Mary on Calvary where the devotedness and the sacrifice of the *Mother of Grace*, equalled, as far as such a thing could be, the devotedness and the sacrifice of the *Author of Grace*.

But, above all, and most especially, it is the part of the *religieuse* of the Cenacle to imitate *Mary in the Cenacle*. There, Mary dwells to instruct the Apostles, to strengthen the Apostles; in a word, to devote herself to the Apostles.

After the Ascension she dwells there in their midst to prepare them for the accomplishment of the promise of the divine Master, that is for the

coming of the Holy Ghost who was to descend upon them all.

And even after Pentecost she still remains in the Cenacle to assist the Apostles in the gigantic work of the first establishment of Christianity; and we will never understand to what a degree the need of devoting herself to the triumph of her Divine Son filled and stirred her maternal heart. To co-operate with the Apostles in extending the truth and love brought from heaven upon earth by the Word become incarnate in her virginal womb, she would willingly have given her life a hundred times.

Not being able to die so soon for the reparative work of her Son already triumphant in Heaven, she generously accepts the long weariness of her exile on earth. She bears, always through devotedness to that divine Son and to the souls he came to save, the inexpressible pain of the separation. Touching and encouraging figure which the *religieuse* of the Cenacle should keep constantly before her eyes, especially when in times of sadness and desolation she also seems to feel, with the void in her heart and the solitude of her soul, the absence of the Beloved.

To terminate what regards devotedness as the mainspring of the apostolate, it remains for us to reveal its true source. Devotedness such as we have shown it, suffices to everything, and without it nothing suffices in the exercise of the apostolate. But where shall the *religieuse* of the Cenacle derive that devotedness she needs to preserve her from faltering in the sometimes dolorous practise of her consecrated life, where shall she draw that abnegation she requires in order to be always ready for the missions obedience will impose upon her? A great problem to resolve, and the true solution of which we now give.

It may all be resumed in this single word : *to love Jesus Christ*, but to love him in a manner not vulgar nor ordinary ; to love him with a sovereign love ; a love dominating every other love. The secret reason of all the devotedness we can lavish upon souls is, without contradiction, our devotedness to Jesus Christ ; and it is from that devotedness to the person of our Lord that the *religieuse* of the Cenacle must derive the supernatural and sublime ambition to devote herself everywhere and in everything ; to devote herself incessantly, and to devote herself in an absolute manner. The

religieuse of the Cenacle is, in reality, especially and completely vowed to the service of our Lord. It was to Him she one day said a first time what she should repeat and repeat every day of her life: "Lord, receive my entire liberty, with the universality of all the acts that come within its domain; *Suscipe universam libertatem meum.*" Mark it well: *universam!* All is included, and nothing is left out. Every act depending upon her liberty is given, consecrated; in a word *vowed* to the Sovereign Master. And it is that devotedness to Jesus Christ which explains all the other devotedness her vocation, and notably her apostolic vocation, *exacts*.

But what is capable of producing that devotedness to Jesus Christ? *The love of Jesus Christ.* There, where there is no love, there cannot be true devotedness. On the contrary, where love is found, devotedness is found: for love produces it spontaneously, as a tree produces its fruit. Love and devotedness are bound one to the other, as the effect is bound to the cause, and as the cause produces the effect. We may even say that in practise it is not possible to distinguish the one from the other—for devotedness is love acting, that is to



say love giving itself, surrendering itself, lavishing itself, by action.

Therefore, the woman-apostle in the Cenacle in order to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ, and by Jesus Christ to the souls he has loved even so far as to die for them, should be first of all enflamed and embraced by the love of our Lord. Without that love not only she cannot suffice to the ministries of devotedness her vocation to the apostolate demands of her; but she cannot even live as a simple *religieuse*, because without that love her life stifles as all life that has not air to breathe.

That love was kindled in the hearts of the first *religieuse* of the Cenacle by their holy founder. "What I desire," Father Terme often repeated to them, "is hearts that *love* Jesus Christ; consequently hearts that will be *devoted* to him, and devoted to him *because they love him*." And he added: "I shall be too well repaid for my efforts when I shall have the consolation of seeing in all the daughters God has given me, so many spouses, so many lovers of Jesus Christ.

The holy founder was right: the heart of Jesus Christ ought to be in an especial manner the

source of the religious life and especially of the apostolic life in the Cenacle.

The ideal and the type of all that life, as we have already remarked, is the life of the primitive Cenacle.

In the primitive Cenacle, what filled the hearts of the Apostles, and especially the heart of Our Lady, was the love of Jesus Christ. How the Apostles then loved their divine Master, and especially how Mary loved her divine Son, is more easy to conceive and imagine than to well express and describe. It was not only Saint Peter, it was all the Apostles, who could exclaim, addressing the divine Master whose absence they wept, and whose promise they awaited: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And on the day of Pentecost that love attained its highest perfection and its greatest intensity. It became in each and in all a focus so ardent and so impatient to communicate itself, that it experienced an immense need of bursting and spreading without, of casting abroad its burning sparks, and of kindling in the world the universal conflagration of the divine love.

Ah ! it was because what descended into their

hearts under the visible form of fire was the *divine love* itself, the Holy Ghost, the essential and substantial love of the Father and of the Son.

At the same time that the Holy Ghost was to teach the Apostles all truth—*docebit vos omnem veritatem*—that is all the truth Jesus had come to reveal to the world—that, divine Spirit was to embrace their hearts with the fire of his love, so that they might find in that very love courage and ambition to propagate the truth; for it was, indeed, of that love our Lord had said: “I am come to bring fire upon earth, and what do I wish, if not that that fire be kindled, and that it embrace all hearts; *ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur?*”

Therefore, we have reason to affirm that the ardent and profound love of our Lord should be in a special manner, and, if I may so speak, in a *reserved* manner, the source of apostolic devotedness for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle holily desirous of fulfilling her vocation and of attaining its end by imitating her ideal: Mary in the Cenacle, Mother of Grace and Queen of the Apostles.

We have seen the necessity, the nature, the characteristics, the models, and the source of the

devotedness the *religieuse* of the Cenacle is bound to bring everywhere and always to the exercise of the apostolate which is, as it were, the exterior form of her Institute.

It now remains for us to explain what is the vital principle of that devotedness, and which may be called its *living soul*.

CHAPTER III.

PRAYER AND MEDITATION IN THE CENACLE.

SECTION 1.—Prayer and Meditation ; Conditions of the Labor of the Combat, and of the Apostolate.

Thus far we have shown in the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle two essential things that characterize it and reveal its true spirit ; a spirit like that of Saint Ignatius, at once strong and generous. These two things are, on one side, the labor of the struggle, and notably of the struggle against self ; on the other side the labor of the apostolate by devotedness to the neighbor ; the first of those two things constituting the fundamental basis, as it were, the ground-work of the Institute ; the second being its exterior form.

But neither the labor of the struggle nor the devotedness of the apostolate can be sustained and practised excepting by means of a third thing which is the soul of the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle: that thing is *prayer or prayerful medita-*

tion. Yes, prayer and meditation; there we behold as it were the living soul of the Institute. And there we see what animates and explains the individual labor of the combat and the fraternal devotedness of the apostolate.

The warlike labor of the struggle against self would be only a mechanical occupation, and the devotedness of the apostolate only a sort of purely automatic action, if they both were separated from what is necessarily their living and vivifying soul.

In this respect it can be said of that moral and collective body which is called the religious family, what is said in the Book of Genesis of the creation of the human body. God did not content himself with making that body out of the slime of the earth and with giving it, with its harmonious forms all the plastic beauty possible to organic matter. He breathed into it, to animate it, the breath of life: *Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae*.^{*} Man then ceased to be only an admirable mechanism; he became a living soul, that is a body animated by a vital breath.

The founders and foundresses of religious societies follow in their creations an analogous

^{*} Gen. II.: 7.

process. They do not content themselves with forming organized bodies for interior struggles and exterior conquests. They also breathe a *soul* into those bodies; that is they give them a breath which is their vital spirit and their motive force. That living soul may vary, and in fact does vary according to the diversity of the bodies it animates and the diversity of the functions those bodies are destined to fulfil.

Now, what *ought* to be and what veritably *is*—especially for the Society of the Cenacle—the *spiraculum vite*, the breath of life, is *prayer* and *meditation*. By those terms—those two words—*prayer* and *meditation*, is meant every spiritual exercise, whatever may be its form, that tends directly to put the soul in effective communication with God.

And it is precisely that, prayer and meditation, which is needed to give to the family of the Cenacle with strength for the militant labor, the force of the conquering apostolate.

Without prayer and meditation the labor of the combat is impotent; it cannot even sustain itself and endure. Human nature is not stronger than itself, and it does not find in itself the power to

overcome and conquer itself. Whoever fails to clothe himself with that true armor of God, *prayer* and *meditation*, will be defeated in the battle, and will never completely accomplish the great law of the militant life, nor the warlike formula of Saint Ignatius: *conquer self*. Because, on that battlefield which is within us and which we are ourselves, there are often such struggles to be sustained that we need, in order to fight and conquer, not only that human strength and power which is called courage, but still more and above all, that divine strength and power which is called grace; grace! that gratuitous gift God makes man and which descends upon us invited by prayer.

Without prayer and meditation every apostolic work is condemned to sterility—we mean to sterility in the superior order of grace. That work may succeed humanly; it will always founder supernaturally. It may gain renown; it will produce no fruit. It may sound loudly in the ears of men; it will not touch hearts nor transform souls. To triumph supernaturally and divinely, supernatural and divine strength is necessary. Now that investiture of the divine strength is the

result of the power of prayer; for, according to the so simple, and, at the same time, so profound, thought of Saint Ignatius, it is upon our union with God by prayer and meditation that depends the efficacy of our works and of our apostolate.

Behold what, in the apostolate as in the combat, *must be* for the *religieuse* of the Cenacle the force that animates, sustains and fertilizes all: prayer followed by prayer; meditation followed by meditation.

Undoubtedly that vivifying and fortifying breath should animate all religious families devoted more or less to the exterior action of the apostolate. But that interior spirit of prayer and meditation ought, we think, to animate in a more special manner the little Society we are speaking of, because that Society was formed as nearly as possible on the model of the apostolic assembly of the Cenacle whose great and principal occupation consisted in the *unanimous* and *persevering* prayer of all the Apostles in union with the holy women, and especially with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, according to the very remarkable words inscribed in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Let us see, then, how and why the

little family of Notre Dame du Cenacle in order to legitimize its name and attain its end *must be* animated by the spirit of prayer and meditation; and in the second place, how prayer and meditation *really are* organized and practised in the Cenacle so as to be what we have called its living or vivifying spirit.

To well explain this capital point of our subject, we must here penetrate the most intimate recesses of the life of Christianity in general, and of the life of the Cenacle in particular.

SECTION 2.

HOW PRAYER AND MEDITATION SHOULD BE THE
SOUL OF THE INSTITUTE OF NOTRE
DAME DU CENACLE.

The vital and substantial element by which the Institute of the Cenacle, like every religious Institute consecrated by the Church, should live, the intimate life that should cause it to bud, to flower, and to bear fruit, is what is called, in Christian language, *the supernatural*.

What is the supernatural? Here is not the place to enter into the profundities of Catholic theology, to explore the paths of Catholic theology in order to try to explain what is, in itself, that mysterious thing meant by this term, *the supernatural*. Whatever may be the depths of this

mystery, in treating of it we are always obliged to come back to this fundamental affirmation, namely: that the supernatural is a participation in the intimate life of God; a mysterious participation, the manner of which cannot be described, but a real participation. Yes; the supernatural is in its essence humanly impenetrable—that is why it is supernatural—it is the life of God in us; it is, according to the sublime and divinely revealing words of Saint Peter, what makes us partakers of the divine nature—*divinæ consortes naturæ* *—that is to say, true sons of God. It is in this sense, according to the same Apostle, that we are a *holy* nation, a *chosen* race, a *royal* priesthood, a truly divine generation.

Now, according to the plan of Providence in that superior order, to draw to us the supernatural, one thing is absolutely necessary: *prayer, meditation*.

The supernatural renders us partakers of the life of God, and prayer and meditation put us in communication with the supernatural. Prayer is for us as the *aspiratory* and *respiratory* organ of the supernatural. By prayer the soul really inhales and breathes the supernatural; she unites

* 2 Pet. I. : 4.

and assimilates it to herself, and makes it the principle of that second life which transfigures the first. Just as by the breathing of our lungs, we inhale the air that causes us to live physically; by our prayer we inhale that superior element which enables us to live Christianly—that is, supernaturally and divinely.

We teach here the essential basis of living Christianity; it is the abridgment of the whole Christian mystery. Whoever does not understand that the supernatural is the true foundation of all Christian life, and that prayer and meditation are the divinely-constituted means to attract within us the supernatural, does not know the first word of the Christian life in general and of the religious life in particular.

Behold the great secret of the mystery divulged, *ecce mysterium dico*. Inseparable union of prayer and the supernatural, and harmonious correspondence of the one with the other. On one side, prayer and mediation call the supernatural and the divine, and on the other side, the supernatural and the divine descend upon souls drawn by prayer and meditation.

This mystery, so interesting for all that claims

the title and dignity of Christian, interests most particularly the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle. Because it—this mystery we have so rapidly expressed—is especially, and above all others, the mystery of the primitive Cenacle, where Christianity and the apostolate were face to face before their extension throughout the world.

The Cenacle was pre-eminently the place of the supernatural, called therein by the prayer of the apostles and disciples, and especially by the all-powerful prayer of *Our Lady*, Mother of Grace and Queen of the Apostles.

Men of God, worthy of attention by the double reason of their religious virtues and their theological and ascetic science have, to explain the supernatural atmosphere of the Cenacle, had recourse to pious suppositions, which, without being of the value of a demonstration, possess with a certain probability a value of edification. We content ourselves here with recalling them without pretending either to repudiate them or to approve them entirely. Among these suppositions, one of the most likely and the best authorized by tradition, one that is even admitted to be almost certain by the gravest men and the theologians the

deepest versed in the science of Christian things, is that the Apostles in the Cenacle consecrated the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, conformably to his divine recommendation: "Do this for a commemoration of me," and that all the disciples present, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, there participated in the holy mysteries. However more or less well founded may be this supposition, we have in nowise need of it to establish in a certain and incontestable manner what we have just affirmed, namely: that the primitive Cenacle was pre-eminently the *place* of the *supernatural*.

It was in the Cenacle that was instituted the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, or of the life of God communicated to men in a permanent manner by the divine Mediator. Consequently, the Cenacle was the first place on earth honored and consecrated by the presence of the Eucharistic God, that is to say by the supernatural itself personified in Jesus Christ, and since the mystery of the Cenacle perpetuating itself in humanity even to the consummation of the ages.

It was in the Cenacle also, in the Cenacle especially, that the supernatural was exhaled from all

the souls there assembled, and especially from the soul of the most Holy Virgin, well called *full of grace*. There the breath of all those souls in contact and in communication with one another, formed necessarily in that blessed place, as it were, a supernatural atmosphere that permeated every recess of their being and influenced them in every possible way.

Finally, it was in the Cenacle that the supernatural made, in a sensible manner on the day of Pentecost, its most solemn manifestation and its most brilliant apparition when it descended with the Holy Ghost into the souls of the Apostles so as afterwards to spread itself abroad in the city of Jerusalem and from there throughout the universe.

Thus looked upon, the Cenacle is indeed what we have named it, the *privileged place of the supernatural*. However modest it may have been by its dimensions and by its architecture, no place has ever equalled it in importance, and no Christian temple, however sacred, has ever been filled with the supernatural and the divine as was that first of all our temples.

But by what mysterious power was the supernatural attracted to the Cenacle? What was it that



caused it to descend in all and in each one with that plenitude the Holy Scripture expresses by these prodigious words: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost; *repleti sunt omnes Spiritu Sancto?*" The Scripture in the same Book of the Acts of the Apostles answers this question and explains to us this mystery: "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus; *hi omnes erant perseverantes unanimiter in oratione cum mulieribus, et Maria matre Jesu.*"*

It is true that already, as we have just said, the Cenacle was by the single fact of the institution of the eucharistic mystery become the sacred dwelling of the supernatural. But it may be remarked that the Saviour preceded and accompanied the consecration of his Body and Blood by his own *prayer*, as though he wished himself to prelude by prayer what may be called the *installation* of the *supernatural* in the Cenacle.

What caused the supernatural and divine life to descend and enter the Cenacle abundantly and super-abundantly was prayer. And what kind of prayer?

* Acts I : 14.

Universal prayer ; for *all* prayed ; *all* without exception.

Unanimous and fraternal prayer ; for all prayed with one same mind and heart : *unanimiter*.

Persevering prayer : *erant perseverantes in oratione*.

Prayer *confident* of the promise of the divine Master.

Omnipotent prayer ; yes, omnipotent in the supernatural and divine order by reason of its union with the prayer of Mary.

Mary there praying, she also with the apostles, the disciples, and the holy women. She was there as the uniting centre of that collective prayer that mounted from the hearts of all, and especially from the heart of the Mother to the heart of her divine Son. She was there, an all-powerful suppliant ; *omnipotentia supplex*, giving to that universal, unanimous, and persevering prayer the force to draw upon the Cenacle and upon all those abiding therein, with the coming of the Holy Ghost the supernatural in essence.

And the Holy Ghost, called by that victorious prayer, came with the resplendent signs which the Scripture relates ; he came bringing the very sub-



stance of the supernatural and the plenitude of the gifts it contains.

Never had anything similar been accomplished in humanity. Those men, but now so subject to all human weaknesses and such slaves of all the miseries of nature, are suddenly so filled, so penetrated, so truly *inebriated* with the supernatural and the divine, that the Jewish people, witnesses of this incomprehensible phenomenon, judge it to be a natural and material inebriation, the only one they then had any knowledge of; for nothing had ever resembled either closely or remotely this phenomenon, absolutely unique in the history of our human race.

Behold in its mysterious reality the Apostolic Cenacle having in its centre Mary, Mother of Jesus and Queen of the Apostles. It is the type and abridgment of the great mystery of Christianity. Christianity considered in its principle and in its intimate life, what is it if not the life of Jesus Christ dilating and expanding itself throughout space and time in proportion as the baptised men and nations are incorporated with it? And Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, what is he if not the life of God manifesting itself under the

form of our humanity and by God and with God coming to dwell in us? By Him and in Him, truly, we have all that is supernatural and divine; *omnia per ipsum et cum ipso*. It is in this sense that Saint Paul could say with all truth: "The Christ is all my life; *mihi vivere Christus est*; he is all the life with which I live as a Christian, that is all my divine and supernatural life."

In a word, our Christianity is, in essence, the supernatural, because real Christianity, Christianity in its most intimate principle, is the life of Jesus Christ living in us, and Jesus Christ is the supernatural, living and personified in Himself. And what conclusively shows us in the Cenacle the image and the living abridgment of true Christianity, is that that Christianity which, in its intimate life, is the supernatural or the divine is at the same time in its visible form, the organization of meditation and prayer; and that in each and in all, and in the whole universe, the supernatural is born, grows, develops and fructifies by prayer.

As Jesus Christ in his mortal life prayed and prayed again, so Christianity, which is Jesus Christ Himself dilated throughout the universe, *prays*. The whole of Christianity is an immense prayer;

it is prayer organized in the universe, at least all over the Christian world. As in the Cenacle, it is *universal* prayer in the largest sense of the word, for that prayer rises from all the parts of the universe where Christianity reigns. As in the Cenacle, it is *persevering* and permanent prayer, for the clock of time strikes not an hour when prayer does not spring forth from the hearts of millions and millions of Christians. Literally, that voice of prayer in the bosom of Christianity is not hushed day or night. As in the Cenacle, that universal and permanent prayer is magnificently *unanimous*, and, it may be added, divinely harmonious.

Nothing in humanity equals the grandeur and the beauty of the Catholic liturgy, that is of the immense concert of organized prayer in the circle of Christianity, resounding everywhere and always with that perfect accord which is the voice of the great Christian unity. Christianity, let us say better, the *Church*, or organized Christianity, prays at one same time in all parts of the world by its bodies hierarchically and officially constituted for prayer. And from all the degrees of that humanity that is everywhere and constantly praying, from the highest to the lowest, and from the

lowest to the highest, ascends that permanent, universal and harmonious prayer that is like a continuous aspiration by which the great mystical body of Jesus Christ draws to itself, develops and increases incessantly, that life which is its life, the supernatural life, or the life of God in us.

Such is Christianity! such we behold it living like the Cenacle by the supernatural life as its own element, and inhaling the supernatural by the power of prayer.

The more a Christian institution, under whatever form, would represent and express in itself in a more perfect manner the life of Christianity and the life of the Cenacle, the more it should like Christianity in the universe and like the Apostles in the Cenacle live with the supernatural life, and draw to itself and develop in itself the supernatural by meditation and prayer.

Therefore all the religious institutions that from age to age have sprung from the ever fruitful womb of the Catholic Church, have in this respect been formed to the image of Christianity, as Christianity itself was formed to the image of the Cenacle.

A remarkable thing: all the founders and

foundresses of religious orders have based their institutions upon the supernatural element. They have, in the creation of their works, followed a supernatural light, obeyed a supernatural impulsion, and pursued by supernatural means a supernatural end. They have, as far as was possible, infused into the body they created the substance of the supernatural; they have made the supernatural as it were the blood of its veins and the sap of its life. And history attests that when the supernatural decreases in a religious body, the vitality and fruitfulness of that body decrease at the same time and in the same proportion.

This is why, in order to prevent the supernatural life from decreasing or from being destroyed in their institutions, those same founders and foundresses imposed upon them a regular and obligatory organization of meditation and prayer. This regulation or this organized system of prayer varies according to the diversity of the Institutes, according to the object they pursue, and the means employed to attain that object. But the same principle, preserver, and promoter of the supernatural life is found in all: namely, a form, an organization of prayer; in a word, a *liturgy*—that is to say,

a work of prayer suitable to each and necessary to all.

Now, if all religious families have made prayer and meditation the vital principle of their Institute; if, as in the primitive Cenacle, they pray to draw to themselves the element of their life—the supernatural; still greater reason has the little family of *Notre Dame du Cenacle* to be a praying family.

The beautiful name it bears must not be a vain ornament; it must be what every well-chosen name ought to be—the sign of what it *is*, the authentic testimony of the reality. The supernatural should be breathed and inhaled everywhere in its dwellings, and that inhalation and that breathing should be by means of prayer and meditation.

Yes, above all, and as essential condition of all, the supernatural should constitute the vital element of the Society of *Notre Dame du Cenacle*, should be its respirable air; air in which souls should live and move as the birds in the material air, as fishes in the water, better still, as the angels in heaven.

The *religieuse* of the Cenacle should keep her heart and soul turned towards heaven and God, not only during the hour when the rule commands



prayer and meditation, but at all hours; without ceasing she should call upon herself, upon her works, and upon the entire Congregation, the vivifying breath of the supernatural and the divine. She should always be able to say, with the Royal Prophet: "*Os neum aperui et attraxi spiritum*, I opened my mouth to receive the spirit;" that is, "I opened my whole soul and dilated all my heart to draw into my being, my God, Thy vivifying Spirit;" finally, her entire life, even in her silence, should chant, as it were, a perpetual *Veni, Creator Spiritus*.

To prepare herself to communicate to the souls that approach her something of the divine light, she ought, then, by force of prayer and meditation, to cause the rays of that divine light to descend into her own soul. And to be able to communicate the fire of divine love, she should, by the contemplation and meditation of the mysteries of the life of the divine Well-Beloved, unceasingly warm her heart at the very focus of that love, the *Sacred Heart of Jesus*; so that she may, she also, repeat with the Prophet: "My heart is inflamed with the fire of love in my meditation, *in meditatione mea exardescet ignis*."

Therefore, let the little Society of the Cenacle always remember that it is the daughter of prayer; that it sprang from the prayer of a holy priest and from the prayer of a holy woman; that it was born in a place consecrated by prayer; that the breath of prayer passed over its cradle, and that ever since it has grown, has developed, and that it develops still by that same breath of prayer.

Finally, let its children constantly meditate and introduce into the practice of their life these words of one of their Mothers whom God seems to have given them expressly to inculcate in the entire family the true spirit that should animate the Cenacle: "To show you what is God's will in regard to our little Society, we must tell you that in the Cenacle *it is especially necessary to pray*; that the *soul* of the religious life in the Cenacle is prayer and meditation. Prayer is in the Cenacle the source of life; it is the continuation and progress of life, its perfection, and its consummation."

SECTION 3.

HOW PRAYER AND MEDITATION ARE IN REALITY
THE SOUL OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE IN
THE CENACLE.

We have shown how in principle and by right the life of the Cenacle, to justify its name and attain its end, should be a life entirely supernatural in a perpetual, unanimous, and persevering prayer.

Now it happens that what *should be* really *is*, and that in this case the fact and the reality correspond perfectly to the principle and the obligation.

It is true that the life of the Cenacle is not purely contemplative and praying. Action has a large place in it, for the Society is active and has an apostolic end; but the first rank among its duties belongs to prayer. In the Society of Notre Dame du Cenacle Martha's *role* is wonderfully united to that of Mary, but in such a way as to leave to Mary's the better part, just as in the house

of Bethany. Prayer, without being the sole and exclusive occupation in the Cenacle is there the *vital principle* of all occupations; prayer there gives to action, with its grandeur and its beauty, its power and its fecundity; it is at the beginning, in the midst, and at the conclusion of all acts; it is the principle that animates them, vivifies and fertilizes them; it is in the diversity of occupations that fill up the hours, the unity of all the acting members, and of all the actions of each individual member; and here gladly we again repeat the words of some one who has a special authority to speak on this subject: "The spirit of the Cenacle is a universal spirit in one great *unity*; and that unity, in its laborious life, is formed by prayer and meditation."

The Society of the Cenacle has, as should be expected, its particular organization of prayer—an organization perfectly adapted to its particular life. It has its work of prayer—its own liturgy—by means of which it takes part in the universal concert of the great liturgy, or of Catholic prayer.

This work of prayer is accomplished especially under three principal forms, as follows :

The first is the regular (that is, commanded by

the Rules of the Institute) and personal *daily meditation*.

The second is the *recitation of the office* in common.

The third is the *perpetual Adoration* of the Most Blessed Sacrament; perpetual, not in each single sanctuary of the Cenacle, but in the entire Society.

Thus, in the first place, there is for every *religieuse* the hour, ordered by the Rule, of daily meditation, during which she unites herself in a special manner with God and inhales in that private interview with him, that supernatural element of which we have spoken : hour, at once, of recollection, of silence, of meditation, of prayer, and of contemplation ; hour truly set apart, the *great hour* of the day ; especially the decisive hour when great lights are received and great resolutions taken ; hour of real ascensions of the soul, when the *religieuse* of the Cenacle reads in the book of the life of Jesus and Mary, as in a living mirror, the ideal of perfection towards which she is bound to tend daily ; and by the light that shines upon her from that divine ideal reads in the interior book of her own life the history of her faults and her imperfections. At

that double spectacle of the perfection she beholds in her model and of the misery she discovers in herself, she is humiliated, confounded ; sometimes even she is moved and softened to tears ; she asks at once pardon for the past and strength for the future ; and each morning rising in a new flight towards Jesus Christ Our Lord, she forms the efficacious resolution to know him more intimately, to love him more ardently, and to follow him more faithfully, to use the generous and courageous formula of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius. This is to say, clearly enough, that the meditation practised in the Cenacle ought to be, above all, affective and *effective*, conformably to Saint Ignatius' thought ; and that it ought to temper the soul with force, rather than plunge it in joy. What should be desired and sought is not ecstatic raptures, but energetic resolutions. *And even if

* Assuredly, methods of meditation and contemplation have in the Cenacle no more than in the Society of Jesus an absolutely exclusive character ; and what is called the *state of prayer* is not for all souls essentially identical. God has indefinitely varied ways of soliciting souls to communicate with him, and he has to draw them secret touches and interior attractions of which he alone, and the souls that are the objects of them, know the sweet, and sometimes the dolorous, mystery. On this point the Institute of the Cenacle like that of Saint Ignatius, makes a legitimate concession to exceptions ; it does not pretend to enchain God's liberty with regard to souls, nor the liberty of souls with regard to God.

in that hour of her intimate communion with God, in presence of the sufferings and difficulties that await her, she feels like Jesus in Gethsemane, overwhelmed with fear, disgust, sadness, and weariness, if that hour of meditation becomes for her an hour of agony: then is the moment to say with Jesus agonizing in the *Fiat* of the Passion, and to make of that suffering and desolate meditation what may be called a sacrifice—that is to say, the most elevated and the most salutary expression of prayer.

With the morning meditation when the *religieuse* is admitted to the hour of conversing privately with her God, there is in the Cenacle the collective prayer by means of the regular recitation of the *Office* in common, at least for the choir *religieuse*.

By that collective prayer the little Society imitates the apostolic Cenacle, where all prayed with a unanimous and persevering prayer in union with Mary, Mother of Jesus.

And we may believe that Our Lady is there, also, in the midst of her children to second their prayer by her own.

By that collective, unanimous, and regular

prayer the Society of the Cenacle also imitates as nearly as possible the liturgy of the great Christian society; at least it sounds its particular note in the concert of Catholic prayer; and with the Church their mother, the *religieuse* of the Cenacle cause to be heard on earth in the fleeting hours of time what the angels sing in Heaven in the lasting hour of eternity, the praises of the Lord.

Thus, with so many other religious families, with the priests, the pastors, the Bishops, the Pontiffs, in a word, with the whole Church, they fulfil the great and sovereign duty of every human creature towards God the Creator, the duty of *praise* which Saint Ignatius in the beginning of his Exercises proclaims by these simple but luminous words: "Man was created for this end: to praise God, his sovereign Lord." And it is not alone with the Universal Church that the *religieuse* of the Cenacle unite themselves by that prayer which blesses and *praises* the Lord; they also unite themselves with all the creatures that in their fashion sing the blessings and praises due to the Creator.

And when that common and unanimous prayer is recited with that exactitude, that measure, that

precision, that should be given to it; when the hearts of the religious sing softly what the words repeat aloud; and when all those voices are as one single voice, and all those hearts as one single heart: oh! then that harmonious prayer resounding upon earth resembles as nearly as possible the heavenly harmony. The voices that rise from the Cenacle ascend towards God to offer Him as one of the best parts of its prayer the sacrifice of praise, *sacrificium laudis*; that chorus of prayer is like an echo of the voice of the seraphim singing in heaven the eternal canticle: "*Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!* Blessed and praised forever be the God who has created us; the God who illumines us with His divine light, who protects us with His divine power, and draws us by His divine love to inebriate us one day with His divine felicity!" Happy the children of the Cenacle who in that blessed hour of the common and fraternal prayer will understand all the beauty and all the sublimity of the act they accomplish! They will find in it with the graces such prayer obtains, the holy jubilation and the filial joy of the true children of God praising and exalting upon earth their *Father* who is in heaven.

The third act of prayer in the Cenacle is as the perfection and consummation of the other two. It is the *perpetual Adoration* of the Most Blessed Sacrament: Adoration that is made alternatively in each House of the Society, during the day before the Blessed Sacrament exposed and during the night before the tabernacle.

By that Adoration the Cenacle, in imitation of the Universal Church, completes the work of its prayer.

The supreme function of the life of the Cenacle is perpetual and universal adoration, perpetual and universal supplication, perpetual and universal reparation, perpetual and universal thanksgiving before the mystery of Jesus Christ, always present and constantly immolated upon our altars, that is to say, before the central mystery of true Christianity.

It is not possible to imagine a better conception—Christianly and supernaturally better—than the thought of realizing in an Institute the perpetuity of the eucharistic adoration, and of making of an entire society, whose members may multiply indefinitely, a single *adorer*, prostrate night and day before the altar, begging Jesus Christ to pour out

incessantly upon the Church and upon the world that spirit of life of which He, in His adorable Sacrament, is the inexhaustible, the universal, and the only source.

This practice of the *perpetual Adoration* of the God of the Eucharist is so well recognized as the great Christian practice that it has become (especially in recent times) the principal and almost exclusive work of certain religious families, and under various names, one of the most consoling realities of Christian life in the XIXth century, when we see the Eucharistic worship assuming, even among the simple faithful, greater proportions than ever before.

It is the holy originality of the Cenacle to join in its twofold action of militant labor and apostolic zeal the generous practice of the perpetual Adoration.

And, to speak plainly, the Society could not dispense itself from that practice. Its very name seems to impose upon it the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, for the Cenacles founded by the new Institute imitate, as far as they can, the primitive Cenacle.

We have seen that it was in that divinely august

and sacred Cenacle that the great Sacrament of our altars was instituted. It was there also that for the first time it was adored by the Apostles and by Our Lady.

And we may believe, as we have previously said, that in the particularly solemn days of the life of the Cenacle after the Ascension of Jesus Christ, the eucharistic worship was already practised there; that already the Apostles exercised their new priesthood by the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice; and that the disciples, the holy women, and Mary herself there received the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The Adoration of the most Blessed Sacrament gave to the prayer offered in the Cenacle its perfection and its efficacy. It was then perfectly suitable that the religious institution which, while bearing the glorious name of the Cenacle, has for its object the imitation of its holy realities, should have made the perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament the central point and the principal act of its liturgy; that is to say the completion of the work of its prayer.

Thus you see prayer, which is the living soul of the Cenacle, is there practised under three principal forms: the individual *Meditation*, the *Office*

in common, and the perpetual *Adoration* of the eucharistic mystery.

But in addition to these three regular times of prayer, there is in the Cenacle the spontaneous prayer which at every hour of the day and of the night may spring forth from each soul in particular; and there is that prayer accompanying action which becomes itself an effective prayer. The soul in the Cenacle, like that of the Apostles, and especially like that of Mary, should be always turned towards Heaven so as to breathe the supernatural element which sustains her life; and even in the details of the most apparently indifferent occupations she ought to endeavor to realize the Apostle's words: "Pray, pray without ceasing; *sui intermissione orate.*"

This is not yet enough; an absolute purity of intention directing every act to its supernatural end, the incessant soaring of the soul towards the heavenly and the divine, and the spontaneous outbursts of a heart burning with divine love, should render *action* itself a prayer.

Verily, in the Cenacle, action not only does not prevent prayer, but is itself prayer. Literally, in the Cenacle action prays. And the whole Society, in

all the intimate details of its life of combat and in all the exterior acts of its apostolic life, is an *action praying* because it is everywhere.

Once again, behold what we have called the *living soul* of the Cenacle: Prayer, by which all the souls, as in the Cenacle of Jerusalem, inhale and breathe their veritable element, the supernatural; prayer which is a personal exercise in the meditation ordered by the rule; prayer which is a common exercise in the recitation of the *Office*; prayer which is an exercise at once personal and common in the *perpetual Adoration* of the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar; prayer which penetrates and animates everything; prayer which accompanies all action and which, even, is action perpetually praying; in a word, prayer in all, everywhere, and always, in the details and in the unity of all the movements of the life of the Cenacle blessing, praising, and glorifying God; and under all forms and in all manners repeating, or rather singing from the depths of all the souls united in one unanimous, universal, and continual concert these magnificent words: "To the greater glory of God; and with him be praised and glorified forever, Jesus Christ, His Son and Our Lady of the Cenacle."

It is thus that the Institute of Notre Dame du Cenacle, while inhaling by prayer and meditation the veritable element of its life, the *supernatural*, imitates, as far at least as what is human can imitate what is divine, the life of the primitive Cenacle.

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION.

We have shown, in a rapid sketch, the career of the Society of the Cenacle during the half-century of its existence. We have signalled particularly those three stages that mark its historic life: namely, its commencement, its development, its present situation.

We have recognized the authentic sign of the works of God in the circumstances that surrounded its cradle, in those that accompanied its growth, and in those that surround its present existence and its acquired situation—situation, according to all prevision and all probability full of life and promise.

Our Lord in marking the little Society of the Cenacle with His own sign said, and says still to all men and women who have knowledge and appreciation of the things of Jesus Christ: This work is My work; so long as it walks in the paths I have traced for it, and so long as it preserves the spirit I have given it for the accomplishment of its mission, it shall have its great and beautiful place in My Church.

Entering, then, into the intimate life of the Cenacle we have tried to tell in what consists the principal spirit that animates that little Society, and, without going into the details of the Constitutions and Rules, we have summed up all in these three essential and fundamental points:

The labor of the combat, which is the basis, the inner principle of the Society's life.

Devotedness in the apostolate, which is its exterior form.

Prayer and meditation, which are its living soul.

Behold the Cenacle as it appears exteriorly in the light of its own history, and behold the Cenacle seen, or at least caught sight of, in its inner life by means of the revelation of the spirit that animates it and gives it, with its vitality, its special physiognomy.

May all the souls Providence leads to those pious asylums where Notre-Dame du Cenacle reigns as sovereign, understand not only by the understanding but also by the heart, the triple and single spirit, the generous and valiant spirit that animates that society little still in numbers and extension but already great by the good it does in the present, and by the still greater good it aspires to do in the future.

Ah! when all the souls predestined by Providence to take their rank in that holy legion, will have properly understood what a *religieuse of the Cenacle* ought to be in order to correspond to God's call and to the designs of his divine goodness; when they will have understood in an efficacious manner that they have come to the Cenacle as to the field of battle and to the field of the apostolate, that is to conquer self and to devote self to others; especially, when they will have understood better still that the Cenacle is the place of prayer, of the prayer that gives courage in the combat and devotedness in the apostolate; finally, when they will have understood that prayer and meditation under all the forms we have mentioned constitute the great unity in the diversity of functions, of employments and of acts; when each *religieuse* in her rank, her place, her function, will by the entire observance of the constitutions and rules have become the personification of the Institute, the Constitution incarnate and the living Rule. Then that little society even in its silence will make heard one of the most beautiful harmonies that God harkens to from his eternity; an earthly

harmony that is a precursor of the harmony of Heaven ; a harmony at once single and diverse, wherein all the voices without having either the same brilliancy or the same accent, concur to the perfection of one same concert.

May that beautiful and living harmony of the Cenacle while rejoicing the Heart of Jesus Christ in Heaven, rejoice also the heart of the church on earth ; and with many other religious families pursuing under other forms and by other roads the ideal of their perfection, may the society of the Cenacle be in the firmament of that church another star and add a precious pearl to the garment of that divine Mother, garment resplendent with an admirable diversity in an admirable unity.

But the Cenacle will not limit itself to rejoicing by its holiness and its interior perfection the Heart of God and the heart of the Church : it will be a help and a blessing for the multitudes of souls who will come to submit themselves to its gentle and salutary influences in recollection and retreat. For the Cenacle such as we have shown it in these few pages, will not be alone an interior beauty which Heaven contemplates ; it will not be alone an interior harmony which God listens to : that

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beauty will have its exterior reflections and that harmony its echoes in the world ; and those reflections and those echoes will draw more and more to those holy dwellings souls that even in the midst of the perversions of the world have remained sensitive to the attractions of the good and to the charms of virtue.

Such are the wishes that in concluding we form for the future of *Our Lady in the Cenacle*.

And to express by other images the desires of our heart of Christian, of *religieuse*, and of Apostle, we will say at the end of this little book : May all the Cenacles be like sources of ever running water to which souls thirsting for truth and holiness will come to quench that thirst. May they also be like hearth-stones of light and heat where souls darkened by the shadows of error and chilled by the contacts of worldly life, will come to be at once illumined and warmed ; illumined by the light of divine doctrine, and warmed by contact with divine charity. May they be like battle-fields, always open where generous souls will learn in the practice of the Exercises the truly sublime art and, the most difficult of all, the art of conquering self and of devoting self to

others ; and by a more intimate union with God ; that is, by prayer and meditation, prepare themselves in an efficacious manner for all the struggles of life, and all the conquests of the apostolate.

Finally, may all the Cenacles be protecting asylums where many lives beaten by the agitations of the world will come to seek a shelter from the tempests, and will there find in recollection, silence, and solitude, the rest of the soul, and with that rest and that peace of the children of God upon earth, a foretaste of the rest and peace Paradise reserves for them. Paradise! that *eternal Cenacle* where we all faithful disciples of our Saviour Christ, in company with the Apostles and with Our Lady, will live like the Angels in an eternal and beautiful ecstasy of the glorified life of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

THE END.

CIRCULAR.

The following circular was written by the Reverend Mother Superioress, to make known the work of the Community, established in New York, 1893. The approbation of His Lordship the Bishop, testifies of his Paternal feelings towards this Community :

CIRCULAR.

The Sisters of the Institute of Our Lady of the Cenacle, or Ladies of the Retreat, aspire to follow the example of our Blessed Lady, the Queen of Apostles, and of the holy women who gathered around her; and to employ themselves in the extension of the kingdom of Christ, as far as lays within their power. This aim they seek to accomplish by attending, first, to the salvation and perfection of their own souls, and next by procuring the salvation and perfection of their neighbors, by spiritual Retreats, by teaching Catechism, or any other means which Divine Providence may place at their command.

Prayer being a most efficacious means, it is customary in the houses of these Sisters to have Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed on the Altar, or enclosed in the Tabernacle. Pious souls are invited to join in



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this holy exercise, each taking an hour, or half an hour's adoration, once or twice a week, and praying in a special manner for the Holy Father, for the Bishop and the Clergy of the Diocese.

Secondly, another means consists in Retreats. Some of these are public and given at certain intervals, to all classes of persons as, for instance, school children, First Communicants, girls employed in factories, teachers, young ladies, and Christian mothers. Others are private Retreats lasting from three to eight days. Those who attend either kind of Retreat may reside in the Convent, or spend a portion of the day within its walls. In addition to these longer Retreats, every month a Retreat of a single day, lasting from Mass in the morning until Benediction in the evening, is given for different classes of persons.

Thirdly : another means employed by the ladies is the teaching of Catechism. Religious instruction is imparted to children and adults, whether converts or not, whether poor or rich.

Fourthly : Clubs for working girls. After working-hours and on Sundays, members of these clubs come to refresh their souls in the Cenacle. They receive religious instruction and good advice

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from the Lady Patronesses of the work, and are supplied with periodicals and other reading-matter, which may benefit and entertain them.

Fifthly: Sodalties of teachers. The members of these Sodalties meet once a month in the Convent Chapel, and receive from a Clergyman instructions appropriate to their wants and duties. When the members are out of employment, efforts are made to find some good Christian family in which they may receive temporary shelter.

Sixthly: Sewing meetings. These meetings take place generally once a week. The associates make vestments for churches, and garments for the poor. Materials are provided by monthly subscription from the associates.

Benefactors who by way of alms or any other means help the Sisters in the accomplishment of their gratuitous labors, may be affiliated to the Order, and share, *ipso facto*, in all the privileges and Indulgences for the living and the dead, granted to the Society by the Holy See.

For further information address

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR,

St. Regis' House,

523 W. 140th St., N. Y. City.

CIRCULAR.

NOTE.—The Convent is within half a block of the Cable Cars running through 125th Street.

APPROBATION OF THE ORDINARY.

I hereby approve and earnestly recommend to the Reverend Rectors and to the faithful of the Diocese the pious Community referred to in the foregoing prospectus.

MICHAEL AUGUSTINE,
Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, Dec. 8, 1892.



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